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FAMILY WORSHIP.

A SERIES OF PRAYERS,

WITH REMARKS ON PASSAGES OF SACRED SCRIPTURE,

BY CLERGYMEN

OF THE

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.



PRAYER

BLACKIE & SONS, QUEEN STREET GLASGOW;
SOUTH COLLEGE ST EDINBURGH, AND WARWICK SQUARE LONDON.

FAMILY WORSHIP.

A SERIES OF PRAYERS,

WITH

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL REMARKS ON PASSAGES

OF

SACRED SCRIPTURE,

FOR EVERY MORNING AND EVENING THROUGHOUT THE YEAR;

ADAPTED TO THE SERVICES OF DOMESTIC WORSHIP,

BY

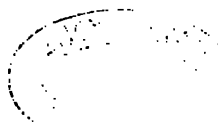
ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY CLERGYMEN

OF

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

**BLACKIE & SON, QUEEN STREET, GLASGOW;
SOUTH COLLEGE STREET, EDINBURGH;
AND WARWICK SQUARE, LONDON.**

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PUBLISHERS' PREFACE.

THIS work originated in the suggestion of several pious and highly talented individuals, that an attempt should be made to promote the important duty of Family Worship, and to aid in its revival where it has unhappily fallen into neglect, by placing in the hands of the community what may be termed a model book, embracing so great a variety of examples, as to avoid the monotony of a single form of prayer, and suited, by its extensive and comprehensive application, to the varied wants and circumstances of man. It was ultimately determined that the plan of the work should include—the selection of a portion of scripture for every morning and evening throughout the year, and also a psalm or paraphrase for praise; a brief comment on the scriptural passage of each service, and a prayer for every morning and evening, adapted to the circumstances of the entire household, and based upon the portion of holy writ recommended to be read. The passage of scripture must be read from the Bible itself, that it may be always in the hands of the family. This plan met the approbation of all the ministers of the Church of Scotland to whom it was submitted; and from this learned and pious body of men, no fewer than one hundred and eighty individuals were selected as contributors to the work. It has been altogether a labour of love on their part; and the varied talent and devotional spirit so conspicuous throughout the FAMILY WORSHIP, attest the Christian zeal with which they have performed their respective parts. This work, it is believed, will long remain a valuable and delightful record of *their* piety and usefulness; and will, in after times, serve to stimulate the labourers in the Lord's vineyard to that exemplary discharge of the ministerial duty which so eminently distinguishes the clergymen of the Church of Scotland in the present day.

The entire superintendence of the work was confided to the Rev. James Gibson, A. M., of Glasgow; and the proprietors are deeply sensible of the advantages that have accrued to the publication from his talent and untiring assiduity. To this gentleman, and to the numerous contributors, the publishers offer their respectful thanks.

As a companion to the FAMILY WORSHIP, a work is in preparation, to be entitled, "The CHRISTIAN'S DAILY COMPANION, presenting an entire View of Divine Truth, in a Series of Meditations for every Morning and Evening throughout the Year. To which is appended, a brief Manual of Prayers for Private Devotion." The arrangement of this work is in the hands of the Rev. N. Paterson, D. D., Glasgow; and many distinguished ornaments of the Church of Scotland will aid in its composition.

GLASGOW, 1841.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

OUR labours in editing this work have now been brought to a close : and we can look back on the occasional hours spent in them with unmingled satisfaction. The object of the work has been to aid and promote the duty of Family Worship ; a duty alike commended by its essential interest and importance, and dictated by the principles of Scripture and even the feelings of natural religion, a duty whose decay or revival is always coincident with the revival or decay of vital religion itself. It is usually understood to consist in praise and prayer, and reading of the Word of God. It has its foundation in our dependence on God for all the blessings and comforts of our being, and our duty to praise and obey the Author of them all. Prayer is the natural expression of a dependent being, and is especially the duty and the privilege of man, sinful, weak, ignorant, subject to many trials and miseries, and born for eternity.

The very same principles and circumstances that make it a duty and a privilege in an individual to pray to God, make it incumbent upon a family. Nay, the family relation strengthens the feelings and obligations of prayer, multiplies the inducements and combined them into one united interest of deeper and more tender intensity. The very existence of one Great Father of the universe, implies, that the common and united homage of all creation is his due. 'Of him, and to him, and through him, are all things.' All beings and all combinations of being must look up to him who is the great centre and source of their existence, and their joy. Especially is it most reasonable and natural that this should be the case in the closest, most intimate, and endearing of all social relations,—that of the family. Here there is a clear and a felt community of wants, difficulties, trials, and enjoyments, in which every member feels and sympathises, as intensely as in his own individual concerns ; even with an intensity increased in proportion to the number of individuals of whom it is composed. Every morning and every evening they have the same common blessings to acknowledge, the same sins to be confessed and forgiven, the same natures to be renewed and sanctified, and the same hopes to cherish. They need protection from the same dangers ; they have the same consolations to seek, the same trials and afflictions to endure ; they are journeying together to the same home ; they hope to die in each other's presence, or if scattered in the providence of God for time, they hope to meet together at last,—a family in heaven. Having one God and Father, one faith, one Lord, one baptism, and one hope of eternal life, nothing can be more reasonably suitable and delightful than to meet together round the same family altar, morning and evening, to commit their way to God.

Family Worship has many great and obvious advantages. Besides the all-important benefits of a directly religious kind, in promoting piety and drawing down the blessing of God, and of him who both promised his presence to two or three meeting together and asking anything in his name, it promotes order, regularity, and propriety of behaviour in a household. The very submission to the God of all, which it expresses and cherishes, promotes the spirit of submission and obedience in the family. It checks unseasonable levity, rebukes disorder, quarrelling, or unruly passions, which cannot consist with family devotion. Either the one or the other must cease. It invests the parent and master with the most venerable of all characters,—that of a servant of God : and where the natural affection of parents and children, and the proper kindness on the one hand, and respect on the other, of masters and servants, are hallowed and deepened by the benign and solemn feelings of religion, love, peace, and obedience will reign through the family. The principles and examples of Scripture entirely harmonize with these views. We do not expect to find particular precepts on this head ; because, as we have seen, the reasons that enforce prayer on man as an individual, enforce it on him in all his relations ; and it is worthy of remark, that all God's commands are addressed to him as an individual ;—"Thou shalt, or shalt not" do this or that, binding on him every where and at every time. Wherever there are social blessings and duties, social prayer to God is due. But we may expect examples of these principles in the Scriptures ; and accordingly there are many. Thus Abraham was commended for his observance of family religion, and that too in connection with the promise, that in him all the *families* of the earth should be blessed, Gen. xviii. 19. Eli was punished for not religiously training and ruling his family. Joshua resolved, that as for him

and his house, he would serve the Lord. Job was in the constant practice of family religion; David, Daniel, and others. Our Lord and his apostles joined in domestic prayer; and that inimitably beautiful and comprehensive form of prayer dictated by our Lord, is a social or family prayer, and that on the principles we have above laid down.

Many difficulties are pled as an apology for neglecting this duty; especially, some plead that they cannot overcome their natural reluctance and timidity to engage in prayer in the presence of others. We cannot attach much importance to this as a reason for neglecting the duty; though we doubt not it prevails to a great extent. It is therefore highly necessary to remove it. With such a form as this in his possession, no one may plead such an apology. There is in this work ample matter and variety as a help to beginners; and even what may be very useful to stir up devotion, and supply varied expression to the more experienced Christian. It is with this view and not to supersede the practice of extempore prayer, that this work has been projected; and both publishers and contributors would deeply regret if this were the result. They believe, on the other hand, that it will greatly tend to furnish such matter and expression for prayer, as will soon enable any one who devoutly uses it to dispense with forms altogether.

There is, however, in this country, what we cannot but consider a very unreasonable prejudice against the use of forms in all circumstances. It has arisen from the fearful evils and abuses arising out of the shameless and idolatrous forms of Popery, mumbled over by a lazy and corrupt priesthood, without feeling, and almost without decency; succeeded by the cruel and insane attempts to force upon a reluctant people, forms containing sentiments and rites which they abhorred. Yet it is a well known fact, that our early reformers prepared and used forms in the worship of God, and the sentiments of our forefathers on this head may be gathered from the following passage in the Directory for Family Worship, usually bound up with the Confession of Faith of the Church of Scotland, and containing many wise and excellent directions:—

“So many as can conceive prayer, ought to make use of that gift of God; albeit, those who are rude and weaker may begin at a set form of prayer, but so as they be not sluggish in stirring up in themselves (according to their daily necessities) the spirit of prayer, which is given to all the children of God in some measure,” &c.

We need not refer to the form left by our Lord as an example of such a practice; where his disciples were taught to “say” the same words. Indeed, what are all the passages of Scripture usually adopted in extempore prayer? what are the apostolic benedictions, but forms of prayers? We every day more and more admire the wisdom and piety of our forefathers, who permitted them when necessary, while they did not encourage them where they can be dispensed with. We greatly venerate the practices of our Church, and the habits they have cherished among our people. We are persuaded that it is highly advantageous, in order to keep alive the spirit of devotion, to leave the mind unfettered by fixed forms; and that there are times and circumstances in the providential and spiritual history of a pious soul and a pious family, for which no previous foresight can provide suitable expression at a throne of grace, and which will overflow all the artificial channels previously prepared. In such cases it would be most improper that the spirit should not be left to its free and unfettered exercise.

Having such views, we, with many others, hailed the present attempt of the enterprising publishers of this work with much satisfaction. The Christian world is deeply indebted to them for the extensive circulation of many religious works of the most useful kind; and which have been of great service in reviving and promoting religion in districts of the country where it had fallen low. We have occasion to know, that the present undertaking has been a valuable treasure to many, and especially to families with females at their head; or where the usual head of the family has been absent or unqualified from sickness or inability. We have had high satisfaction in superintending the publication of a work, which, from the great success it has already attained, promises, by the blessing of God, to be extensively useful to generations yet to come. May God be pleased to vouchsafe his Holy Spirit to crown this anticipation with an abundant increase in the fruits of righteousness, which are, by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Amen.

LIST

OF THE

CLERGYMEN WHO HAVE GIVEN THEIR ASSISTANCE IN THE PRODUCTION OF THIS WORK:—

Rev. Allan, John, Aberdeen	Moral Philosophy in the Uni-	Rev. Muirhead, G., D.D. Cramond
— Anderson, A., Boindoe	versity of Glasgow	— Munro, Alexander, Manchester
— Arnot, David, Dundee	Rev. Gardiner, M., D.D. Bothwell	— Munro, James, Rutherglen
— Arnot, William, Glasgow	— Gentle, A., Alves	— Murray, John, Aberdeen
— Bannerman, James, Ormiston	— Gibson, Alex., Balmaghie	— Murray, John, Dunbog
— Barr, J., D.D. Port-Glasgow	— Gibson, James, A.M., Glasgow	— Napier, Peter, Glasgow
— Begg, James, Libberton	— Gilston, W., Carnock	— Nicholson, W., Ferry-Port on-
— Bennie, Archibald, Edinburgh	— Glen, James, A.M., Benholm	Craig
— Black, Wm., D.D. Glasgow	— Gordon, A. L., Aberdeen	— Nisbet, Archibald, Glasgow
— Bonar, J. J., Greenock	— Grant, John, Petty	— Nixon, William, Montrose
— Booth, F., A.M., Inverleithen	— Gray, A., D.D. Kincardine, W.	— Noble, J., A.M., St Madoes
— Brewster, James, D.D. Craig	— Gray, Andrew, Perth	— Noble, John, A.M. Fodderty
— Brodie, James, Monimail	— Grierson, James, Errol	— Paisley, Robert, Partick
— Brown, M., A.M., Morpeth	— Guthrie, Thomas, Edinburgh	— Park, John, Liverpool
— Brown, David, Roslin	— Graham, J., D.D. Killearn	— Paterson, John J., D.D. Sunder-
— Brown, Robert J., D.D. Professor	— Hay, J. K., Edinburgh	land
— Marischal College, Aberdeen.	— Henderson, J., Carmunnock	— Paterson, N., D.D. Glasgow
— Brown, Thomas, D.D. Glasgow.	— Henderson, J., D.D. Glasgow	— Paterson, Alex., Glasgow
— Brown, Thomas, Kinneff	— Henry, David, Marnoch	— Paton, Robert, Straiton
— Bryce, James, Aberdeen	— Hill, Alexander, D.D. Dailly	— Paul, John, Edinburgh
— Bryce, John, Ardrossan	— Hutchison, A., Warrenford	— Paul, William, Banchoory
— Brydon, Robert, Dunscore	— Jamieson, Robert, Currie	— Philip, Alexander, Cruden
— Buchan, William, Hamilton	— Jeffrey, Robert, Girthon	— Ralph, H., LL.D. Liverpool
— Buchanan, H., Strathblane	— Keith, P. H., Hamilton	— Reid, Alexander, Portsoy
— Buchanan, Robert, Glasgow	— Laird, John, Inverkeillor	— Robertson, James, Ellon
— Burns, Robert, D.D. Paisley	— Landsborough, D., Stevenston	— Rose, Alex., D.D. Inverness
— Burns, James C., London	— Lee, Robert, A.M., Campsie	— Rose, Lewis, A.M., Glasgow
— Burns, William, Kilsyth	— Leishman, M., Govan	— Roxburgh, John, Dundee
— Cameron, D., Glasgow	— Lewis, George, Dundee	— Russel, J., LL.D. Dalsarf
— Campbell, Hugh, Manchester	— Lewis, James, Leith	— Shanks, Robert, Buckie
— Clark, John, A.M., Edinburgh	— Lochore, A., A.M., Drymen	— Simpson, David, Aberdeen
— Clark, Alex., A.M., Inverness	— Lorimer, John G., Glasgow	— Simpson, Robert, Kintore
— Clark, Thomas, Methven	— Lorimer, Peter, London	— Smith, Robert, D.D. Montrose
— Clugston, William, Forfar	— Lorimer, R., D.D. Haddington	— Smith, J., Wellpark, Glasgow
— Clason, Patrick, D.D. Edinburgh	— Lumsden, James, Barry	— Smith, James, Chalmers's Church
— Cooke, H., D.D. LL.D. Belfast	— Macbeth, James, Arbroath	— Smyth, John, D.D. Glasgow
— Craig, Robert, A.M., Rothsay	— Macfarlane, John, Collessie	— Spence, Alexander, Aberdeen
— Crawford, Robert, Irongray	— Macfarlane, P., D.D. Greenock	— Steen, Geo., Newtonlimavady
— Cunningham, W., Edinburgh	— Mackay, M., LL.D. Dunoon	— Stevenson, William, Arbroath
— Cumming, A., Bridge of Earn	— Mackay, W., A.M. Stirling	— Stevenson, J.A.M., Newton-on-Ayr
— Cupples, George, Stirling	— Macpherson, Robert, Inverness	— Stewart, C. C. Aberdalgie
— Davidson, Alex. D. Aberdeen	— M'Cheyne, R. M., Dundee	— Stewart, Harry, Oathlaw
— Davidson, David, Broughty F.	— M'Cosh, James, Brechin	— Stewart, R., D.D. Broughshane
— Davidson, Geo. R., Drumblade	— M'Culloch, J. M., Kelso	— Stewart, J., Wallacetown, Ayr
— Denham, J., Londonderry	— M'Donald, Robert, Blairgowrie	— Strong, David, Kilmarnock
— Doig, Thomas, A.M., Torryburn	— M'Farlane, The Very Reverend	— Thomson, Charles, Wick
— Drummond, J., Forgandenny	Principal, University, Glasgow	— Thomson, John, Dysart
— Duncan, Alexander, Coylton	— M'Kellar, A., D.D. Pencaitland	— Thomson, John, Yester
— Duncan, George, J., Kirkpatrick-	— M'Kenzie, Kenneth, Bo'ness	— Thomson, J. W., Monedie
Durham	— M'Kinlay, J., D.D. Kilmarnock	— Thomson, Peter, Dumfries
— Duncan, H., D.D. Ruthwell	— M'Lure, W., Londonderry	— Thomson, Wm., Old Monkland
— Duncan, T. T., M.D. Dumfries	— M'Laggan, James, Kinfauns	— Thorburn, Joseph, Forglen
— Duncan, Thos., Kirkintilloch	— M'Moreland, Peter, Glasgow	— Topp, A., Elgin
— Dunn, William, Cardross	— M'Nair, Robert, Paisley	— Turner, Alexander, Glasgow
— Fairbairn, Patrick, Salton	— M'Naughton, A., D.D. Kilbride,	— Tweedie, W. K., Aberdeen
— Foote, Alex. L. R. Brechin	Arran	— Wallace, J. A., Hawick
— Foote, James, A.M., Aberdeen	— Manson, John, Fyvie	— Watson, Charles, D.D. late of
— Forbes, John, D.D. Glasgow	— Mather, William, Stanley	Bruntisland
— Forbes, Robert, Woodside, Aber-	— Menzies, David, A.M., Glasgow	— Whyte, Alexander, A.M., Fetter-
deen	— Middleton, G., Strathmiglo	cairn
— Fowler, J. C., A.M., Glasgow	— Mitchell, G., A.M. Kilmadock	— Whyte, James, A.M., Metillick
— Flyter, Alexander, Alness	— Montgomery, T., Sanquhar	— Wightman, J., D.D. Kirkmahoe
— Forman, A., A.M., Innerwick	— Morgan, James, Belfast	— Wilson, William, Carmylie
— Fleming, W., D.D. Professor of	— Morren, N., A.M., Greenock	— Wood, J. J., A.M., Edinburgh.

LIST OF THE CONTRIBUTORS

TO

FAMILY WORSHIP.

FIRST WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,
Tuesday and Wednesday,
Thursday and Friday,
Saturday,

The Rev. John Smyth, D. D., St George's Parish, Glasgow
— Nathaniel Paterson, D. D., St Andrew's Parish, do.
— James Henderson, D. D., St Enoch's Parish, do.

SECOND WEEK.

Sabbath,
Monday and Tuesday,
Wednesday and Thursday,
Friday and Saturday,

— John Forbes, D. D., St Paul's Parish, do.
— John G. Lorimer, St David's Parish, do.
— Thomas Brown, D. D., St John's Parish, do.
— Patrick Fairbairn, Bridgeton Parish, do.

THIRD WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,
Tuesday and Wednesday,
Thursday and Friday,
Saturday,

— J. C. Fowler, A. M., St Luke's Parish, do.
— Alex. Turner, Gorbal's Parish, do.
— Alex. Gibson, Balmaghie.

FOURTH WEEK.

Sabbath,
Monday and Tuesday,
Wednesday and Thursday,
Friday and Saturday,

— Patrick Macfarlane, D. D., Greenock.
— William Dunn, A. M., Cardross.
— Lewis Rose, Glasgow.
— A. M. Brown, A. M., Morpeth.

FIFTH WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,
Tuesday and Wednesday,
Thursday and Friday,
Saturday,

— Charles Watson, D. D., late of Burntisland.
— James Gibson, A. M., Kingston Church, Glasgow.
— George Cupples, Stirling.

SIXTH WEEK.

Sabbath,
Monday and Tuesday,
Wednesday and Thursday,
Friday and Saturday,

— Archibald Bennie, Edinburgh.
— William Cunninghame, do.
— J. Julius Wood, A. M., do.
— John Paul, do.

SEVENTH WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	The Rev. John Clark, A. M.,	Edinburgh.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— Robert Jamieson,	Currie.
Thursday and Friday,	— P. Booth, A. M.,	Inverleithen.
Saturday,	— James Gibson, A. M.,	Kingston Church, Glasgow.

EIGHTH WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	Very Rev. Principal Macfarlan, University,	do.
Tuesday,	Rev. Robert Lee, A. M.,	Campsie.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— Robert Burns, D. D.,	Paisley.
Friday and Saturday,	— James Monro,	Rutherglen.

NINTH WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	— A. Nisbet,	Glasgow.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— James Foote, A. M.,	Aberdeen.
Thursday and Friday,	— Robert Buchanan,	Glasgow.
Saturday,		

TENTH WEEK.

Sabbath,	— William Nixon,	Montrose.
Monday and Tuesday,	— Robert Paisley,	Partick.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— P. Napier,	Glasgow.
Friday and Saturday,	— H. Duncan, D. D.,	Ruthwell.

ELEVENTH WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	— Robert Shanks,	Buckie.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— E. M'Kenzie,	Bo'ness.
Thursday and Friday,	— Robert Lee, A. M.,	Campsie.
Saturday,		

TWELFTH WEEK.

Sabbath,	— William Burns,	Kilsyth.
Monday and Tuesday,	— Allan M'Naughton, D. D.,	Kilbride, Arran.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— William Black, D. D.,	Barony, Glasgow
Friday and Saturday,	— Alexander Gray, D. D.,	Kincardine, West

THIRTEENTH WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	— Nathaniel N. Morren, A. M.,	Greenock.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— Hamilton Buchanan,	Strathblane.
Thursday and Friday,	— William Thomson,	Old Monkland.
Saturday,		

FOURTEENTH WEEK.

Sabbath,	— James Brewster, D. D.,	Craig.
Monday and Tuesday,	— W. K. Tweedie,	Aberdeen.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— James Glen, A. M.,	Benholme.
Friday and Saturday,	— William Paul,	Nether Banchory.

FIFTEENTH WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	— David Simpson,	Aberdeen.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— Robert Simpson,	Kintore.
Thursday and Friday,	— George Muirhead, D. D.,	Cramond.

FIFTEENTH WEEK.		
Saturday,		
SIXTEENTH WEEK.	} The Rev. David Arnot,	Dundee.
Sabbath,		
Monday and Tuesday,		Broughty-Ferry.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— David Davidson,	Forfar.
Friday and Saturday,	— William Clugston,	Ferry-Port-on-Craig
	— William Nicholson,	
SEVENTEENTH WEEK.		
Sabbath and Monday,	— R. M. M'Cheyne,	Dundee.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— William Stevenson,	Arbroath.
Thursday and Friday,	— William Wilson,	Carmylie.
Saturday,		
EIGHTEENTH WEEK.	}	Glasgow.
Sabbath,		
Monday and Tuesday,		Dundee.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— John Roxburgh,	Errol.
Friday and Saturday,	— James Grierson,	Dunoon.
	— M. Mackay, LL. D.,	
NINETEENTH WEEK.		
Sabbath and Monday,	— George Lewis,	Dundee.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— Thomas Duncan,	Kirkintilloch
Thursday and Friday,	— Robert M'Nair,	Paisley.
Saturday,		
TWENTIETH WEEK.	}	Greenock.
Sabbath,		
Monday and Tuesday,		Hamilton.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— R. Buchan,	do.
Friday and Saturday,	— P. H. Keith,	Methven.
	— Thomas Clark,	
TWENTY-FIRST WEEK.		
Sabbath and Monday,	— James K. Hay,	Edinburgh.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— David Brown,	Roslin.
Thursday and Friday,	— John Henderson,	Carmunnock.
Saturday,	— James Brodie,	Monnemail
TWENTY-SECOND WEEK.		
Sabbath,	— Daniel Cameron,	Glasgow.
Monday and Tuesday,	— John Murray,	Dunbog.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— James Smith,	Dumbarton.
Friday and Saturday,	— Alexander Lochore, A.M.,	Drymen.
TWENTY-THIRD WEEK.		
Sabbath and Monday,	— Andrew Gray,	Perth.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— James Barr, D.D.,	Port-Glasgow.
Thursday and Friday,	— Alexander Duncan,	Coylton.
Saturday,		
TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK.	}	Woodside.
Sabbath,		

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK.

Monday and Tuesday,	. The Rev. J. Noble, A. M.,	St Maddoes.
Wednesday,	— Thomas Brown,	Kineff.
Thursday,	— James Smith,	Dumbarton.
Friday and Saturday,	— James Lumsden,	Barry.

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	— Robert Smith, D. D.,	Montrose.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— A. L. Gordon,	Aberdeen.
Thursday and Friday,	— Alexander Philip,	Cruden.

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK.

Sabbath,	— Alexander Reid,	Portsoy.
Monday and Tuesday,	— Alexander Spence,	Aberdeen.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— J. T. Patterson, D. D.,	Sunderland.
Friday and Saturday,	— Gordon Mitchell, A. M.,	Kilmadock.

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	— M. Leishman,	Govan.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— John Russell, LL.D.,	Dalserf.
Thursday,	— A. L. R. Foote,	Brechin.
Friday,	— James M'Cosh,	Do.

TWENTY-EIGHT WEEK.

Sabbath,	— A. T. Patterson,	Glasgow.
Monday and Tuesday,	— T. Montgomery,	Sanquhar.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— Hugh Ralph, LL.D.,	Liverpool.
Friday and Saturday,	— John Park,	Do.

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	— James Lewis,	Leith.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— H. Cook, D. D., LL.D.,	Belfast.
Thursday and Friday,	— James Morgan,	Do.

THIRTIETH WEEK.

Sabbath,	— R. Stewart,	Broughshane.
Monday and Tuesday,	— James Denham,	Londonderry.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— W. M'Clure,	Do.
Friday Morning,	— G. Steen,	Newtownlimavady.
Friday Evening,	— James Smith,	Dumbarton.
Saturday Morning,	— G. Steen,	Newtownlimavady.
Saturday Evening,	— James Smith,	Dumbarton.

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	— R. M'Pherson,	Inverness.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— Alexander Munro,	Manchester.
Thursday and Friday,	— Hugh Campbell,	Do.

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK.		
Saturday,		
THIRTY-SECOND WEEK.	} The Rev. James Whyte,	Methlick.
Sabbath,		
Monday and Tuesday,		Forgardenny.
Wednesday and Thursday,		Aberdalgie.
Friday and Saturday,	— John W. Thomson,	Monedie.
THIRTY-THIRD WEEK.		
Sabbath and Monday,	— James M'Laggan,	Kinfauns.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— William Mather, M. A.,	Stanley.
Thursday and Friday,	— Alexander Cumming,	Bridge of Earn.
Saturday,		
THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK.	}	Fettercairn.
Sabbath,		
Monday and Tuesday,		Newton, Ayr.
Wednesday and Thursday,		Alves.
Friday and Saturday,	— Professor Brown,	Aberdeen.
THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK.		
Sabbath and Monday,	— George R. Davidson,	Drumblade.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— Joseph Thorburn,	Forglen.
Thursday and Friday,	— A. S. Patterson,	Hutchesontown.
Saturday,		
THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK.	}	Inverkeilor.
Sabbath,		
Monday and Tuesday,		Wallacetown, Ayr.
Wednesday and Thursday,		Kilmarnock.
Friday and Saturday,	— T. Doig,	Torryburn.
THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK.		
Sabbath and Monday,	— David Henry,	Marnoch.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— William Gelston,	Carnock.
Thursday and Friday,	— Charles Thomson,	Northshields.
Saturday,		
THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK.	}	Dumbarton.
Sabbath,		
Monday and Tuesday,		Stevenston.
Wednesday and Thursday,		Ardrossan.
Friday and Saturday,	— Robert Brydon,	Dunscore.
THIRTY-NINTH WEEK.		
Sabbath and Monday,	— Robert Crawford,	Kirkpatrick-Irongray.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— Alexander Clark,	Inverness.
Thursday and Friday,	— Matthew Gardiner, D. D.,	Bothwell.
Saturday,	— Robert Paton,	Straiton.

FORTIETH WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	The Rev. Professor Hill, D. D.,	College, Glasgow
Tuesday,	— Robert Paton,	Straiton.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— A. Topp,	Elgin.
Friday and Saturday,	— Peter Lorimer,	London.

FORTY-FIRST WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	— Peter M'Moreland, St Matthew's,	Glasgow.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— Dr Lorimer,	Haddington.
Thursday and Friday,	— John Thomson,	Yester.

FORTY-SECOND WEEK.

Sabbath,	— Henry Stewart,	Oathlaw.
Monday and Tuesday,	— Dr M'Kellar,	Pencaitland.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— Mr Bannerman,	Ormiston.
Friday and Saturday,	— Thomas Guthrie,	Edinburgh.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday Morning,	— Dr Clason,	Do.
Monday Evening,	— A. S. Paterson, Hutchesontown,	Glasgow.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— James Begg,	Libberton.
Thursday and Friday,	— Alexander Flyter,	Alness.

FORTY-FOURTH WEEK.

Sabbath,	— John Graham, D. D.,	Killearn.
Monday and Tuesday,	— Alexander Rose, D. D.,	Inverness.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— John Grant,	Petty.
Friday and Saturday,	— J. Noble, A. M.,	Fodderty.

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK.

Sabbath,	— David Menzies, A. M., Martyrs,	Glasgow.
Monday,	— James Smith,	Borthwick.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— George J. Duncan,	Kirkpatrick-Durham.
Thursday and Friday,	— John Thomson,	Dysart.

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK.

Sabbath,	— Thomas T. Duncan, M. D.,	Dumfries.
Monday and Tuesday,	— Professot Fleming, D. D.,	College, Glasgow.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— James C. Burns,	London.
Friday and Saturday,	— Peter Thomson,	Dumfries.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	— John Murray,	Aberdeen.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— Alexander D. Davidson,	Do.
Thursday and Friday,	— James Smith,	Borthwick.
Saturday,	— James Robertson,	Ellon.

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK.

Sabbath,	The Rev. James Robertson,	Ellon.
Monday and Tuesday,	— John Manson,	Fyvie.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— A. Anderson,	Boindoe.
Friday and Saturday,	— George Middleton,	Strathmiglo.

FORTY-NINTH WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	— Robert Jeffray,	Girthon.
Tuesday and Wednesday,	— J. M. M'Culloch, D. D.,	Kelso.
Thursday and Friday,	— Robert Craig,	Rothsay

FIFTIETH WEEK.

Sabbath,	}	— John M'Farlane,	Colessie.
Monday and Tuesday,		— John Allan,	Aberdeen.
Wednesday and Thursday,		— J. Bryce,	Do.
Friday and Saturday,		— James M'Kinlay, D. D.,	Kilmarnock.

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK.

Sabbath and Monday,	— Robert M'Donald,	Blairgowrie.
Tuesday,	— Dr Wightman,	Kirkmahoe.
Wednesday and Thursday,	— Andrew Hutchison,	Warrenford.
Friday,	— James Smith,	Borthwick.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK.

Sabbath,	}	— James Wallace,	Hawick.
Monday and Tuesday,		— Adam Forman, A. M.,	Innerwick.
Wednesday and Thursday,		— W. M'Crae, A. M.,	Stirling.
Friday and Saturday,		— W. Arnot,	Glasgow.

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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S PASTORAL LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND, ON FAMILY WORSHIP.*

THE Publishers consider that they cannot more appropriately commence their Work on FAMILY WORSHIP, than by prefixing the GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S PASTORAL LETTER to the PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND, on the same subject, in which the duties and privileges of domestic worship are most strongly recommended and enforced.

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, To our dearly beloved People: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord.

On your behalf, brethren, we thank God, whom we serve with our spirit in the Gospel of His Son, that your faith and devotion have long been spoken of throughout the world; and we are bound always to have remembrance of you in our prayers night and day, greatly desiring that, like your forefathers in times of clearest light, you may continue steadfastly in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, abounding in the exercises of that unfeigned godliness, which is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

In compliance with the solicitations of many who watch for your souls, and are jealous over you with godly jealousy, we have resolved to issue this brotherly exhortation on the sacred and indispensable duty of Family Worship,—not as if we had any recent ground for apprehending that it is likely to fall into more extensive neglect, but because we know too well that it is by no means universally practised, and because even the purest minds require to be stirred up, by way of remembrance, that, while they hold fast the profession of their own faith without wavering, they may consider one another to provoke and encourage, by good counsel and good example, to the love of truth and holiness, and to the habitual and serious observance of those offices of piety, whereby, as surely as the body is nourished and refreshed by its daily bread and its nightly rest, the soul of man, through the nurture and admonition of the Lord, is progressively matured in excellence and strength, till it is advanced to the perfection and glory of its immortal existence.

In calling your attention to this momentous topic, we think it superfluous to enlarge on the high obli-

gations by which the duty is enforced,—obligations which are involved in the very constitution of our frail and dependent being, and impressed on the understanding and the heart by the persuasive voice of Scriptural authority, opening the ears of men, and sealing the instruction, by which God speaketh, not once or twice, but at sundry times, and in divers manners, adding line upon line, precept upon precept, promise upon promise, and threatening upon threatening, so as to bring perpetually to remembrance both the blessings which are multiplied to them that fear the Lord, and the fury which is poured out on the families which call not on his name. The appointment of the reasonable service of bowing down at the domestic altar before the Lord our Maker, that, in waiting for the promised effusion of the Spirit of grace and supplications, we may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, has ever been regarded by all men of sound mind and Christian experience, not as the imposition of an irksome yoke, but as the conveyance of an inestimable privilege; for as often as we mark the tokens of God's power and presence in making the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice, must every enlightened and purified heart, lifting up its affections to the Father of Spirits, acknowledge, with triumphant satisfaction, that it is a good thing to show forth His loving-kindness in the morning, and His faithfulness every night.

To those only who have tasted and seen it, can we speak intelligibly of the tranquil delight which is awakened and sustained by such periodical acts of household worship, as are not a mere formal ceremony in which the members join with reluctance or cold compliance, but the fervent utterance of lips, which, out of the abundance of the heart, in which the love of God is shed abroad, are, by the influence of that unquenchable affection, most pleasingly constrained to celebrate the mercies which are new every morning, and to offer up the spiritual incense of prayer with as unceasing regularity, as from the sanctuary of Israel the smoke of the evening sacrifice arose, or as the early dew of Hermon descended on the mountains of Sion, when there the Lord commanded the blessing—even life for evermore.

Without all controversy, the benefits produced

* *Edinburgh, May 30, 1836.*—The General Assembly having considered and approved the Overtures recommending a renewed Admonition for the purpose of stirring up the people of this land to the faithful and regular observance of the Worship of God in their Families, did, and hereby do, require the following Pastoral Letter to be read by all the Ministers of this Church, from their several pulpits, on the first convenient Lord's Day after it shall come into their hands.

JOHN LEE, *Cl. Eccl. Scot.*

by this hallowed exercise are ineffably precious. It is not enough to say that thus are devout and grateful emotions awakened,—thus is faith in the superintending providence and holy promises of God confirmed,—thus are the graces of humility, resignation, and patience, nourished and increased, while, with the contemplation of the infinite excellence, the unwearied beneficence, and the everlasting strength of the Lord Jehovah, we contrast the instability, deceitfulness, and desperate wickedness of the heart of man. By the infallible testimony of Heaven, we are authorised to affirm constantly that there is an efficacy in the prayer of faith, which, though inexplicable by our feeble understandings, must, through all ages, continue to avail as much as it did in the days of those patriarchs, prophets, and righteous men, who, as princes, had power with God, when, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, they had grace to serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear. The Lord is ever nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit, when, taking with them the words which inspired wisdom has taught them to utter, they lift up their desires at His footstool, not seeking great things for themselves, or panting after the dust of the earth, or sighing for the vain delights of the sons of men, but thirsting and longing for the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, and who, being justified by faith, has peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have no encouragement to hope that, by taking thought for temporal satisfactions, we shall find grace in the sight of the Lord; but if we aspire after the best gifts which are the heritage of the faithful, seeking first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, we believe, and are sure, that His Divine power will give us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Though our Father in the heavens knoweth what things we have need of before we ask them, and though the purposes of His everlasting kindness are often fulfilled more substantially by withholding than by granting the desires which we naturally cherish, it is only to them who worship Him in spirit and in truth, that He has promised to do exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think; and we have no more solid ground to expect that we shall receive without asking, or that we shall find without seeking, than the husbandman has to look for an abundant harvest springing up in the fields which he has neither planted nor watered, or than the merchant has to calculate on receiving his own with usury, for the talent which has been tied up in a napkin, or buried in the earth.

It is not for us to unfold the laws of the spiritual world, or to demonstrate why and how it is that the communications of heavenly influence and favour are in any degree suspended on the frequency and fervency of our supplications. But this we know, that, as in old time, the father of the faithful commanded his children, and his household after him, to unite with him in the exercises of a holy life, that the Lord might bring upon Abraham that which he had spoken of him,—even so, in all generations, may the willing and obedient hope, that, while seek-

ing unto God, and committing their cause to Him who doeth great things and unsearchable, they place their confidence, not in their own importunity, or their own efforts; but in the exalted merit and prevalent intercession of the Mediator of the New Covenant, they cannot fail to be made partakers of that abundant grace which ought to be the chief object of all our prayers, and which is never denied to the humble. We know assuredly that our heavenly Father giveth His Holy Spirit to them who ask Him; and if, for the sake of His beloved Son, He is pleased to bestow this unspeakable gift in answer to the prayer of the believing soul, why should we hesitate to admit that it is of the Lord's mercies, that, by the eternal ordination of Divine wisdom, prayer has been rendered one of the sure and sufficient means of transmitting to the faithful every other good and perfect gift which cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning?

To the duties of social prayer and thanksgiving, accompanied with that instruction in righteousness which the reading of the Scriptures is calculated to impart, let the benefits thus conferred on your several domestic circles operate as a strong incitement. It is not, indeed, within the compass of human ability to infuse grace into the souls which are most tenderly beloved. But great will probably be the influence of a pious example on those who confide in your affection, and have cause to revere you. If your children and dependents perceive, that, while you are not slothful in the business of time, you are also fervent in spirit serving the Lord, and that, while you provide for your own the food and the raiment which are obtained by the blessing of God on the hand of the diligent, you ask for them that bread of heaven which strengtheneth the heart, may you not hope that they will be stirred up both to pray and to labour for the meat which endureth to life everlasting, and that they will learn to regard the favour of God as a better portion than the abundance of corn and wine? May you not hope, that while your own minds are elevated by contemplating the works of creation, providence, and redemption, and by reflecting on the dignified and endearing relation to which you have been raised in having 'received the Spirit of adoption, whereby you cry, Abba, Father,' they who look up to you for guidance and protection will take pleasure in approaching to God, and, through the experience of the peace of walking with the wise, will be taught to abhor the enticements of sinners, and to hold fast that which is good? And even in the case of those who, through perversity of heart, and the snares of an evil world, have forsaken the path of integrity and truth, may it not be hoped that the wise counsels which they have for a season forgotten, and the devotional habits which they have long failed to imitate, will, like the bread cast upon the waters, be found after many days? Small must have been your experience of the discipline of providence, if you have never known so much as one who had wandered so far from the way of peace as to disappoint the earnest expectations of his father, and to turn the joy of her who bare him into bitterness.

but who, after his own wickedness had corrected him, and his backslidings reproved him, has been awakened to new obedience, by recalling to his agonized mind, with reverential awe, the solemn image of the parental guide, in whose quiet habitation the daily exercises of prayer and praise hallowed every pursuit, lightened every care, soothed every sorrow, and seasoned every enjoyment, so as to render the voice of rejoicing and salvation in the tabernacles of the righteous, a lively type of the blessed conversation of heaven, and a delicious foretaste of the fellowship of the saints in light.

If you know these things by your own experience, or by the incontrovertible testimony of them who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, happy are ye if ye do them. Nor can you have peace and safety if, knowing what is good, you leave it undone.

And while you present your supplications for yourselves and your families, forget not the eternal concerns of the families which call not on the name of God. If it be, as it ought to be, your heart's desire, that they may be brought to the obedience of the gospel, brethren, pray for us, and for all the ministers of the truth, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you. Such an intercession as this will assuredly prove efficacious towards the enlargement of the household of faith, if all of you, both small and great, not only in the congregations of the upright, who in heaviness of heart sigh for the abounding of iniquity and the failing of truth, but in your families apart, and in your unseen retirements, prostrate yourselves at the footstool of your Father in heaven, who seeth in secret, and pour out your desires before Him in that effectual, fervent importunity which, like the long and patient waiting of the husbandman for

the precious fruit of the earth, will, according to the sure word of promise, issue in plenteous showers of blessings, not confined to any favoured spot, or any privileged community, but dropping down fertility far and wide over fields co-extensive with the inhabited world, filled as it shall be in that evening-time of light with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea: and thus the God of the whole earth, in remembrance of His holy covenant, and in fulfilment of the good pleasure of His goodness, will arise and have mercy not only on the mountain of holiness in which He had His dwelling in time past, but on all in every place who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord; so that, while He clothes His priests with salvation, and makes His people shout for joy, the ways of Zion, which have mourned because few came to the solemn feasts, shall be thronged with the multitudes who keep the holy day with thanksgiving in their hearts, and the high praises of God in their mouths,—wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of those times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, when His work shall appear before the face of His servants, and His glory to their children; and they that fear the Lord, being all replenished with the riches of grace, shall take that sweet counsel together which revives the inward part, and knits the brotherhood of Christians in the unity of the faith and the holy bond of perfectness. 'Then shall the offering of His people be pleasant unto the Lord as in the days of old, and as in former years.' 'And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence.'

FAMILY WORSHIP.

FIRST WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM I.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS I. and II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

PSALM I. ver. 1—3. The happiness of the true believer is set forth as contrasted with that of irreligious and ungodly men. 'Walking,' 'standing,' 'sitting,' express various gradations of character. 'The counsel of the ungodly' expresses the opinions and customs of those who consider not the Lord, nor regard the operation of his hands. 'The way of sinners' denotes their usual course of living. 'The seat of the scornful' is the high place of open infidelity: to sit in it is to occupy it with conscious satisfaction. Ver. 3, 4. describe, by means of a beautiful similitude, the rise, progress, and consummation of true religion in the heart. As the tree with its fruit and leaves proves the kindly qualities of the soil on which it grows, so the renewed heart brings forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God. Ver. 4—6. express the several destinations of the righteous and the ungodly: the honour consequent upon the one condition—the debasement and wretchedness which are inseparable from the other.

PSALM II. ver. 1—4. describe the malignant hostility of both Jews and Gentiles to the gospel and its author. This interpretation is fully sanctioned, Acts iv. 25—29. xiii. 32, 33. Ver. 6. David, as type of Christ, was established upon his throne on Mount Zion. Christ the antitype, eternally ordained King of kings, and Lord of lords; his name is exalted above every name. Ver. 7. 'Declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead,' Rom. i. 4. Ver. 8, 9. He is to rule over all the earth. Ver. 10—12. direct to the supremacy of the Son of God over all flesh, and the homage due to Him from all the potentates and subjects of the earth.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.

The first psalm is replete with the obligations of the law: the second is more conversant with the privileges and good hopes of the gospel. The one dwells on the duties and attainments of the renewed sinner—the other on the work and triumphs of the Saviour and King of Zion. In the former we are taught the blessedness of the godly man: in the latter, 'the righteousness of God our Saviour.' The first directs our meditations to the destinies of the righteous and the wicked: the second to the judgment-seat of Christ, unto whom the Father hath committed all judgment—that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. Let us meditate with reverence and godly fear on the unalterable state of the soul at death and judgment: and let us 'kiss the Son, lest he be angry and we perish from the way.' Let kings and all in authority be deeply impressed with their responsibility to Him, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice. And let Christians rejoice in the sure word of Jehovah's testimony, that 'all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God;' that 'all nations shall be blessed in Jesus Christ; and that all nations shall call him blessed.'

PRAYER.

Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion, and unto thee shall the vow be performed. We are altogether unworthy to appear before thee, thou Holy One of Israel. In thy sight, O Lord, we are all as an unclean thing, and our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Enable us to draw nigh at this time unto thee, in the all-prevailing name of our only Mediator, Jesus Christ the righteous. For his sake, pardon our iniquity, which is very great. Receive us graciously, love us freely. Put thy Holy Spirit within us, that we may never walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor

sit in the seat of the scornful. It is of thy mercy that we have not followed a multitude to do evil, and this day we would bless thy name for the institution of the Christian Sabbath. May we be enabled to commemorate with humility and thankfulness, the finished works of creation and redemption. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. May we rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and who ever liveth to make intercession for us. Be pleased, O Lord, to send forth thy light and thy truth: let them lead us, let them bring us unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. May our delight be in the law of the Lord: and in thy law may we be disposed to meditate all the day. Sanctify us through thy truth; thy word is truth. Make us fruitful in every good word and work. Make us as trees planted by the rivers of water, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

Bless to us, O Lord, for these and all other holy purposes, the reading of thy word and the public duties of thy sanctuary. Go with us to the house of prayer, and grant thy heavenly blessing to pastors and people, that whatsoever shall be spoken or heard, may be as it becometh the oracles of God. Suffer not the good seed to be choked, or to be rendered unfruitful by the cares or the vanities of this present evil world.

Thou hast set thy King upon thy holy hill of Zion. May all nations be blessed in Him, and call Him blessed. May the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. Give thy Son the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. May the waste places of Zion be rebuilt, and the glory of the Lord arise upon her as in the days of old. Visit, with thy special consolations, the sons and daughters of affliction. Let them receive, O Lord, this day a portion of the children's bread. We render our united thanksgivings for the blessings and privileges of the by-gone week, for the rest of the past night, and for the return of thy holy day. Unworthy of the least of all thy mercies, we cast ourselves on the exceeding riches of thy grace, in Jesus Christ our Lord; in whose words we sum up these our petitions. 'Our Father which art in heaven,' &c.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM IV.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS III. IV. and V.

PRINCIPAL DOCTRINES.

The III. Psalm has been generally considered as referring to the rebellion of Absalom, and the conspiracy which he fomented in Israel, against his father. No guilt can be conceived more atrocious than that of a child rebelling against his father and seeking his life, unless it be that of rebellion against God. David's Lord experienced persecution of the basest kind. His enemies hated him with a cruel hatred. He was wounded in the house of his friends. Jehovah is the defence and the glory of his people, when all created refuge faileth. Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. God hath never said to any of the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain. It is most upholding to know, that greater is He that is with us, than all that can be against us. The glory of the Church's salvation is to be ascribed to Jehovah alone: 'of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things.'

In Psalm IV. we are taught that the Lord is a hiding place from the tempest, and a covert from the storm, both of outward persecution and of inward trouble: that to Him the righteous run and are safe. We learn the peculiar honour which God puts upon the godly man, and the gracious answers which He vouchsafes to his prayers of faith. We are instructed in the duties of habitual reverence towards God, abstinence from wilful sin, self-examination, meditation, and communion with the Most High. No sacrifices will be acceptable to the Lord but sacrifices of righteousness. It is our duty and privilege to dedicate ourselves wholly unto God. This is, indeed, our reasonable service. All men have the desire of happiness, but it can be satisfied only by the enjoyment of God, and the uplifted light of his reconciled countenance. Great peace have they who love God's law, and nothing shall offend them.

In Psalm V. 1—3. we are taught the duty and privilege of early grateful prayer to God, as King and Lord of all. 4—9. As a God of everlasting holiness, hating iniquity and loving righteousness, He will destroy the wicked, and preserve his prayerful servants. He will banish the former from his presence, but the latter He will bring into his tabernacles, guide them by his counsel, and receive them to His glory. The treachery, cruelty, and deceit of the wicked against Christ and his church, are so great, that God alone is able to protect his people from their hatred, and to lead them in a plain path. Ver. 9. is a description of the natural character of all men, see Rom. iii. 9—20. The words 'destroy thou' in the original, are 'thou shalt destroy,' and to be understood either in the future or imperative sense, as a threatening, or as a prayer; in which latter case it is the Spirit of God, the advocate, vindicating, by David the type of Christ, the government of the holy and just God, in which all holy creatures will acquiesce and say 'even so, amen;' see Rev. i. 7. Ver. 11, 12. All the righteous

shall rejoice in God, their refuge and their strength, their shield and buckler.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How deceitful and desperately wicked is the human heart! From whence come wars and fightings? Come they not hence, even of our lusts, which war in our members. Heaven is the region of perfect concord; of unclouded and immortal friendship. Into that blissful land there shall enter nothing that can hurt or destroy. Let us strive to breathe more of its spirit and temper whilst we are on earth. What precious experience David had, amidst all his troubles, of the help and the consolations of his God and Saviour. In all things, let us likewise, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make our requests known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. With Jehovah as our sure defence, we need fear no evil. Myriads of wicked men and infernal spirits, cannot injure a hair of our head when God is on our side. If He be for us, who can be against us. 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword; nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us.' Opposition to pure and undefiled religion will, inevitably, cover all who indulge in it with shame and confusion of face. Our experience of the Lord's mercies ought to strengthen our faith in praying without ceasing, for the needed succours of His grace and Spirit. Prayer must be accompanied with 'the sacrifices of righteousness, for if we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us.' Let our treasure and our heart be in heaven, that we may experience true and lasting gladness—joy unspeakable and full of glory.

How delightful to have access to the presence of God at all times, as a refuge from trouble and oppression. How delightful and animating 'in the morning,' even 'a great while before day,' like our blessed Lord, to lift up our souls in prayer to God. Let us avoid the path and the company of the wicked, for they shall be destroyed, 'all of them,' and angels and redeemed spirits shall acknowledge the justice of their condemnation; and while it is our duty, after this example of the Lord of glory, to long and pray for their forgiveness and salvation, even though our enemies, nevertheless we must acquiesce in the sovereign righteousness of God, in destroying the wicked, and say, 'even so, amen.' But let us remember, that by nature 'we are no better than they,' and that God alone can 'make us to differ;' and let our joy and praise be heard, because in punishing the wicked, God defends and blesses the faithful, though He 'plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.'

PRAYER.

Almighty and most merciful Lord God, who hast been the dwelling-place of thy people in all generations, we would cast ourselves, this evening, upon thy wakeful care and grace. Thou causest the outgoings of the morning and even-

ing to rejoice over us. We have, this day, experienced thy gracious protection and loving-kindness. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits. We beseech thee, O God, to follow with thy richest blessing all the religious duties in which we and others have been engaged. May thy holy word sink deeply into our hearts. Forbid, O Lord, that it should prove to the condemnation of any of us that light is come into the world, but that we love darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil. May we receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls. Grant that thy Holy Spirit may impart to us spiritual discernment of the truth as it is in Jesus—enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Him—and working in us both to will and to do of thy good pleasure. We beseech thee, good Lord, to forgive the sins and infirmities with which we are all chargeable in the duties of this thy holy Sabbath. In every thing we sin and come greatly short of thy glory. Be merciful, O Lord, to our unrighteousnesses: and remember not our transgressions against us. Grant that the whole services of the sanctuary on earth may be blessed for preparing us to join in the purer services of the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Lord, increase our faith, deepen our repentance, enlarge and sustain our charity towards all men. May we die daily unto sin, and live unto righteousness. May we stand in awe and sin not. May we commune with our own heart upon our bed in the night watches, and be still. Whatever be thy will concerning us, with respect to the good things of this life, be pleased to put gladness into our hearts; even the gladness of thy nation, that we may rejoice with thine inheritance. Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, and give us peace through the peace-speaking blood of the great atonement, and we will both lay ourselves down in peace and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest us dwell in safety.

O Lord our God, let thy way be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee. Restore thine ancient Israel, with the fulness of the Gentile nations. Grant that Pagan idolatry and the power of the man of sin, may be destroyed by the Spirit of the Lord and the word of his testimony. Revive thy work in the midst of the years: in the midst of the years make known: in wrath remember mercy. Bless and prosper thy true church: clothe thy priests with righteousness, and let thy saints shout for joy. Prosper vital religion in our hearts and

families. Bless our Sovereign, and all in lawful authority. May they be ministers of God to us for good, both spiritual and temporal. Take us, and all near and dear to us, under thy divine protection. May we be defended by the Shepherd of Israel, who never slumbers nor sleeps. Into thy hands we commend ourselves—that, whether we wake or sleep, we may be the Lord's. Never leave nor forsake us. Be our God and guide, even unto death; and may we dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Now, unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE I. 1.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS I.

PRINCIPAL DOCTRINES.

Ver. 1. Introductory to the sequel of the chapter, stating comprehensively, the creation of all things out of nothing, by the good pleasure of the Omnipotent. It deserves special notice, that in the original Hebrew, God is in the plural number; the verb 'created' in the singular—intimating, thereby, a plurality of persons with unity of will and of action. Ver. 3. This verse has been justly cited by writers on the sublime, as an irresistible evidence of the inspiration of Moses. The will of the Almighty is instantaneously followed by the *thing willed*. Ver. 5. 'The evening and the morning were the first day,' agreeably to the oriental computation of time, which was measured from one sun-setting to another. Ver. 11, 12. We are here taught, that the works of God are as entirely dependent upon Him for their productive powers, as for their original formation. Whatever they are, as blessings to the creature, they must be derived from the power and the beneficence of the Creator. Ver. 14—24. How varied and striking are the adaptations, enumerated in these verses, of the objects created to their several places and uses! The Divine providence is as conspicuous as the Divine supremacy. Ver. 26, 27. 'Let us make man in our own image.' So God created man in his own image; language which admits of satisfactory explanation only from the doctrine of the trinity in unity: resemblance to whose image includes all intellectual and moral perfections. Ver. 28, 30. 'The food convenient for us,' or for any other race of creatures, whatever secondary causes and instruments may contribute to its production, is the free gift of God, and to be used for his glory.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How gloriously do the finished works of creation manifest the being and attributes of Jehovah! 'For

the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.' In rising from nature up to nature's God, every spiritual worshipper rejoices that 'the heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy work: that day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.' Man at his original creation, loved to contemplate heaven and earth, the sea, and all deep places, as bearing the impress of Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. Creature enjoyments were not then pursued for their own sake, but as means of communion with the giver of every good and perfect gift; 'of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things.' What a mournful change has sin introduced by effacing from the soul that image of God, in which our first parents were created! 'How is the gold become dim? how is the most fine gold changed?' Ichabod, 'the glory hath departed,' is awfully visible where once God was all and in all. But there is revealed to the faith of every returning transgressor, another and a more glorious work of the Almighty, whereby apostate man is made a new creature in Christ Jesus: is born again of the Spirit, delivered from the bondage of corruption; and, according to God's promise, looks for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

PRAYER.

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints. We adore thee, the former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits; in whom we live, and move, and have our being. We humble ourselves in thy presence as sinful dust and ashes. Thou didst create us at first in thine own image, holy, just, and good. Thou hast continually preserved us, and given us all things richly to enjoy. Thou hast caused the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice over us. It is of thy mercies that we are not consumed, and because thy compassions fail not. Be pleased, O Lord God, to look upon us in the face of thine anointed. May we be found in Him. May we be washed and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Renouncing all confidence in the flesh, may we glory only in the Lord our Saviour, as made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. It is our prayer, that God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, may shine in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. May the Holy Ghost form us anew in Christ Jesus, unto every good work. May He subdue the remaining enmity of our

carnal minds; strengthen us with all might in the inner man; prepare our hearts for every Christian duty, and make us more than conquerors over sin and satan, death and hell, through Him that loved us and gave himself for us. Be pleased to sanctify to us, O Lord, for these purposes, the services of thy Sabbath, in which we were yesterday engaged. May we retain serious impressions of the things that belong to our present and eternal peace. In our transactions during this week, may we have grace to set the Lord always before us. May a sense of thy presence solemnize our minds. Hold thou up our goings, that our footsteps may not slide. Guide us by thy counsel, and afterwards bring us unto glory.

May thy way, O Lord, be made known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Bless abundantly our native land. Be gracious to all ranks and conditions of men; high and low, old and young: thou art the Maker of them all. Comfort the sons and the daughters of affliction. Visit them in their times of trouble, in the multitude of thy tender mercies, and be thou a very present help. Never leave us, nor forsake us. Be our God and our guide, even unto death; and after death our exceeding great reward. Now, unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the one true God, be glory everlasting. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XIX. 4.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW I.

PRINCIPAL DOCTRINES.

The first verse of the New Testament intimates the divine and human natures of the Author and Finisher of our faith, in the one person of the anointed Saviour. Ver. 1. Genealogical history of our Saviour's descent from David, as proving his Messiahship; it having been predicted that he should spring from that monarch. 'The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne,' Psalm cxxxii. 11. Ver. 18—20. We are taught that our Lord's incarnation is the object of faith, not of intellectual comprehension; that, in his human origin, as in his divinity, He is 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.' 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.' Ver. 21. Our Lord's distinctive character, 'the Saviour of his people from their sins,' embraces both his work of obedience and atonement in the flesh, and the omnipotent application of it by his Spirit to the heart and conscience. Ver. 22,

23. Prophecy an invaluable branch of Christian evidences. Ver. 24. Conduct of Joseph, eminently worthy of commendation, and graciously rewarded by God with special and supernatural guidance. 'If any man will do the will of God, he shall know the doctrine, whether it be of God.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let the church rejoice that the question of the inspired prophet, 'who shall declare his generation?' (Isaiah liii. 8.) has been most satisfactorily answered in this chapter, which contains 'the book of the generation of Jesus Christ.' Men frequently boast of a line of distinguished ancestry, as reflecting honour upon themselves. How few consider themselves ennobled by the fact, that 'the root and offspring of David' has become bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh. Yet, what earthly relationship is to be compared in dignity with this? It is not, however, in this alone, or even mainly, that a Christian's elevation consists. As the Lord Jesus came into the world to 'save his people from their sins,' our spiritual deliverance, begun on earth, and consummated in heaven, is the blessed fruit of a vital union with the Saviour. If we come short of this, we have neither part nor lot in the primary blessing of our 'New Testament' dispensation. Let us be reminded that salvation is all of grace—not of works, lest any man should boast. 'He shall save his people.' They do not save themselves by any merit of their own. 'Jehovah hath become their salvation, redeeming them from all iniquity and purifying them unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' Titus ii. 14. What cause of thankfulness is it, that 'no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;' ver. 22. compared with 2d Peter i. 21.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most merciful Lord God, we beseech thee to pour out upon us, this evening, the spirit of grace and of supplication; that we may worship thee with reverence and godly fear. From everlasting to everlasting thou art God, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. Unite our hearts in thy blessed service: and grant that our prayers may come up before thee with acceptance, through the all-prevailing merits and intercession of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the righteous, in whom thou art ever well-pleased.

Blessed be thy name, that unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, through whom we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Our souls would magnify the Lord: our spirits would rejoice in God our Saviour. He that is mighty hath done for us great things, and holy is His name.

We adore thee, the God and Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ, who hast so loved the world, that thou didst give thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Grant, we humbly implore thee, that we may have redemption through his blood—the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of thy mercy. May none of us neglect so great salvation, but may we receive it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. Enlighten our minds, heavenly Father, in the knowledge of our guilt and unworthiness. Convince us by thy Holy Spirit, of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. May we be deeply humbled in thy sight, because of our numberless and aggravated transgressions. We pray, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we may have our conversation in the world. Deliver us from the love and prevalence of all iniquity; and renew us in the spirit of our minds, by the effectual working of thy mighty power. Cleanse thou us, O Lord our God, from secret faults. Keep back thy servants also from presumptuous sins: let them not have dominion over us. Work in us both to will and to do of thy good pleasure. May our faith in the Lord Jesus, who alone can save his people from their sins, be instrumental in purifying our hearts and overcoming the world. Vouchsafe to us thy grace and strength whereby we shall serve thee with all good fidelity, and endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. We unite in thanksgivings to thee, the Father of mercies, for thy protection and loving kindness towards us this day: and for all the goodness and mercy which thou art ever making to pass before us. May our experience of thy love constrain us to live, not to ourselves, but to him who died for us. O thou Shepherd of Israel, who never slumberest nor sleepest, we commit ourselves anew unto thee this night. Watch over us for good. If it be thy blessed will to spare us in the land of the living, may we awake to praise and honour thee, the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Be very gracious to all our dear friends. Bestow upon them thy richest blessing, even life that shall never end. Have mercy upon Zion. May thy beloved church be edified and comforted in all her borders. May her people be all righteous. Bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread. Let thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Sanctify afflictive visitations to all who are under thy chastening hand. May the fruit be unto holiness, and the

end everlasting life. Hear these, our unworthy supplications, and when thou hearest, forgive and accept for our great Redeemer's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE I. 7.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS II.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The universe is God's temple, and no sooner has the Sovereign architect finished the place of worship, than He ordains the Sabbath. By this He unites the spiritual with the material parts of creation, that whilst the heavens declare his glory, the souls of men may, on a set day, behold what the heavens declare, and paying the homage that is due, remember the God in whom they live. God rested on the seventh day from all the works which he had made—thus adding the force of example to the authority of law; for it is further said, he sanctified, or set apart that day to himself, making the weekly Sabbath 'an ordinance for ever,' and he blessed it, or made it a blessing to his creatures who should keep it holy to him. Let it be remembered then, that the institution of the Sabbath is co-eval with the commencement of time; that the law of the Sabbath is written throughout the Bible with remarkable frequency: and that it is every where sanctioned by the Almighty, in terms the most terrible, or the most engaging; and let every parent, every child, every master, every servant of the household, 'remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.' It may be seen as well as read, that the devout observance of the Lord's day is followed with peace and prosperity, whilst Sabbath profanation never fails to draw down a curse, which wastes the substance, darkens the prospects, and pursues the soul of the sinner. 'Hallow my Sabbaths, and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.' We have read that the Lord God made man of the dust of the ground, from which lowly origin let us learn to be humble and mindful of death. But, let the sinner seek no solace to a guilty conscience in the dissolution of the body; for a different origin, and one unconnected with dust, is ascribed to the spirit in man,—'The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul;' and so when the body returns to dust as it was, the spirit ascends to God that gave it. That we may fear sin as the only evil, and seek God as the only good, let us see, by the goodness shown to sinless man, that God is love. For man's abode, He planted a garden called Eden, which signifies *delight*. He watered it and made it fruitful, with every tree that was fair to the eye and good for food; those patterns of heavenly things, doubtless, implying the heavenly things themselves, by which the creature, made after the image of the Creator, was supremely blessed. But as a proof that no happiness is to be found in idleness, Adam

was put in the garden 'to keep and dress it.' Thus, in nature's plan, a place is made for human hands; and delightful task it is, by ingenious arts, to add to the beauties of nature; but let no one, unless he can plead a birth and dominion higher than Adam had, complain of labour, for idleness is misery; and the law is just and good, which says, 'if a man will not work, neither shall he eat.' The single restriction as to the fruit of one tree, is no objection to the goodness of God. As God must rule, it was fit that there should be a test of the creature's allegiance; and the forbidden tree being only one of many, the prohibition was the least, whilst the trial was the best. The words of restriction were alike peremptory and plain; the precept was positive, not moral; it did not forbid murder or other crimes to which man's nature, being yet sinless, was not inclined; but it imposed an obligation which might be known to have its source simply in the *Divine will*, without obedience to which God could not be glorified and could not be enjoyed. It is a farther manifestation of the goodness of God, that man had nothing to fear from the lower creatures; as all their tribes of various temper and power came to him with one accord, and in token of friendly submission, to receive their names; and then, for the completion of his felicity, God seeing that with all other good, it was not good for Adam to be alone, took one of his ribs and made a woman, and brought her unto the man; at the same time, in behalf of posterity, ordaining, in these terms, the marriage law; that 'a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.' This ordinance, in the state of innocence, and when the world was least peopled, is a proof that polygamy, which is fertile in strife, and results from tyranny of the stronger sex, is as contrary to the divine law, as it is to the order of nature, and to the excellent economy of the family tie. Let husbands and wives, then, remember their vow; and seek its fulfilment, according to the words of the apostle, as they would seek the blessing of their heavenly Father. 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. Let every one of you in particular, so love his wife, even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art a spirit, and no man hath seen thee at any time: thou goest by and we see thee not, thou passest on also and we perceive thee not; yet art thou nigh to every one of us, for in thee we live and move, and have our being. The darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day: thou lookest unto the ends of the earth, and seest under the whole heaven: neither is there any creature that is not manifest in thy sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Thou knowest our sitting down and our rising up; thou understandest our

thoughts afar off, and art intimately acquainted with all our ways. Thou hast preserved us through the silent watches, and brought us unto the light of a new day. We would this day acknowledge thee our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer; we would seek thy favour, and remember the account that we have to give.

From everlasting to everlasting thou art God, but all flesh is as grass; we all do fade as the leaf: and our iniquities like the wind have carried us away. Thou didst form man of the dust of the ground: thou didst breathe into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul. Thou madest him after thine own image, and didst crown him with glory and honour. But how is the fine gold become dim! the crown is fallen from our heads: woe is unto us, for we have sinned. Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin? Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; but the Lord pondereth the hearts. There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not. We are guilty, O Lord, and deserve that wrath which is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. We bless thee that thou hast laid our help upon one that is mighty to save. As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. O Lord, let thy Holy Spirit take of the things that are of Christ, and show them to us, that we may know our need of a Saviour, and flee for refuge to the hope set before us in the gospel. Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief. By a living faith, may we be interested in all the benefits of the Saviour's death; and show, in our renewed hearts and holier lives, the power of his resurrection. Create in us, O God, a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us. Sanctify us through thy truth, that dying daily unto sin, and living unto righteousness, we may grow daily in conformity to thy will, and be prepared to meet our God. May the like mind be in us which was in Christ.

Follow with thy blessing our reading of thy word and our meditations at this time. May we profit by every opening of thy book. Teach us to hallow thy Sabbaths, to reverence thy sanctuary, to wait upon thee in all thy ordinances, that we may renew our strength; and do thou grant us in this and every season of grace refreshing from thy presence. Lord, dwell in this house and family. Never leave us, and never forsake us. In our several places, duties, and relations, may we all have a single eye to thy service, and do all things to thy glory. Shed abroad thy love in our hearts, that we may love

the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; that as thou hast loved us, we may love one another with pure hearts fervently; that we may bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, find acceptance with thee, through Christ our strength, and our Redeemer. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 9.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The wise men, guided by a star, having found Jesus, opened their treasures and presented him with gifts. And if these distant Magi came on an errand of homage, and were led by a star, what shall be said of us, whom the day-spring from on high hath visited, if we refuse to bring presents to him, and accept the salvation which he bestows? Surely these less gifted sages of the East will rise up in judgment against us.

Warned of God by a dream, the wise men take their way homeward, without returning to Herod with farther information; and thus time is gained for securing the safety of the infant Jesus. The providence, by which he is carried out of Herod's reach, and kept in Egypt till they were dead who sought his life, is just that same holy, wise, and all-ruling providence, which we ought at all moments to consult; and in which, amidst all dangers, we may safely confide. Preserved amidst such perils, and reared to man's estate, when he enters on the ministry of his kingdom, our Lord teaches his disciples, as the children of his Father, to trust in the same providential care that guarded him. 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.' God does nothing in vain. Providence and grace have no contrariety; but both, proceeding from the same loving heart, are directed by the same unerring counsel, and the same omnipotent hand. A heavenly Father tended all the steps of the child Jesus, that the gift unspeakable might not be lost to the world; and the like care will he take of all who, believing in Christ, have the adoption of sons: he will save them from harm, or make all things work together for their good.

To make sure of killing Christ, and being stung with resentment, because the wise men did not return to tell the place of the Saviour's birth, Herod sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof. Whilst we are satisfied that the dealings of providence are all in perfect harmony with those of grace, we have yet humbly to confess, that a deep mystery frequently envelops the path of the divine procedure. But though it be hard to think of this inhuman murder, and to

say to Him that ruleth over all, 'thy will be done,' yet have we a joyful hope in the death of infants. Christ, the Lamb of God, was slain from the foundation of the world; and at all times his death was equally efficacious. He is able to save even the chief of sinners; and how not able to save these little ones who never denied him, and may be regarded as martyrs to his cause? When we look to the ruthless hand that could dissever so tender a tie as that which bound the infant to the mother's breast, let us look also to the love that embraces the infant soul on its arrival in glory, and it will be easier to say, 'thy will be done.' But the heart sickens at the sight of the wretched tyrant, who, growing hard in crime and fearless by impunity, seems eager, in old age, to finish more wickedness before he dies, and to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath; and we read his retribution, in the disquietude that sought peace by the ceaseless murder of those whom his guilt suspected; in the fearful looking for of judgment, which shall be without mercy to them that showed no mercy; in a conscience growing more tormenting by the very vices which its rage demanded, and in the worms of which he died—an emblem and probable foretaste of the worm that dieth not. Such rulers, whilst they persecuted our Lord, and by their abuse of power filled the world 'with lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning,' afforded an affecting proof of the world's utmost need of one who should proclaim glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will to the children of men. Let us thank God for better laws. We owe them to the advent of his Son. And if the enemy be not all subdued, let it be enough, should we suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, that the servant must not be above his Lord; for he also suffered, and gave himself for us. 'It is a faithful saying: for, if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, we adore thee as our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer; the God in whom we live, and with whom we have to do. We adore thee as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have access to thy throne, and in whom thou art reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing unto men their trespasses.

We would offer unto thee the sacrifice of praise, with thanksgiving, for all the goodness and mercy which thou art daily making to pass before us. Thou hast heard our morning prayer; thou hast preserved us throughout the day, thou art still supplying our wants, and giving us all things richly to enjoy. Above all, O God, we thank thee for the gift of thy Son; for the means of grace, and the hope of glory. Bless to us at this time the reading of thy word. May it be the sealed instruction of thy Spirit, and may

the fruit be unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Look on the face of thine anointed, and look in mercy upon us; for thy name's sake, for thy mercy's sake blot out all our transgressions; receive us graciously, heal all our backslidings, and love us freely. Enable us to lead a life of faith in thy Son; to hate every false way, to depart from evil and do good; to add to our faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity; that these things being in us, and abounding, we may neither be barren nor unfruitful, in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. And may we give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, that we may never fall; that we may endure temptation, that we may be faithful until death, that so an entrance may be ministered unto us abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Take us all, O Lord, under thy protecting care during the silent watches: suffer no evil thing to come nigh our dwelling; make us to lie down in peace, and to dwell safely under the cover of thy wings. Bring us, if it be thy holy will, into the light of a new day, and when we awake, may we be still with thee. We know not, O Lord, what trials may yet await us; but do thou prepare us for all that thou hast prepared for us. We adore thee for the riches of thy grace, and we will trust in the wisdom of thy providence. Thy chastisements are not for thy pleasure, but for our profit; thou dost not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men. We would look to him who endured the cross for our sakes, and who, in that he suffered, being tempted, is able to succour us when we are tempted. The very hairs of our head are all numbered, and not a sparrow falleth to the ground without thee. We will trust in thee and not be afraid; for thou, the Lord Jehovah, art our strength and our song, thou also art become our salvation. We commend to thee all who are dear to us. Watch over them and bless them; and may they all, together with us, be kept by thy power through faith unto eternal life. And all that we ask is in the name of Christ, and for his sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LII.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS III.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

We shrink with horror from the sight of a serpent, because we know its venom, and would save our lives; but a child, having no apprehension of danger,

will admire the beauty of the reptile, and run to caress it. All the lower creatures being good in God's sight, must also have appeared good to the eye of man, whilst he was yet innocent like his Maker; and the worst of creatures now, might be the most winning then; for none were noxious when they came to Adam, in token of submission, to receive their names. The serpent therefore being as little dreaded as a lamb, and more subtle than any beast of the field, was selected by Satan, as the cover of his wiles and the instrument of his malice. So disguised, the arch-fiend said unto the woman, when he found her alone, 'Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' God so good! why this needless restriction? surely there must be some mistake. Of a kindred spirit are those modern tempters who raise doubts either as to the amount of canonical scripture, or the meaning of any part; alleging, for the one uncertainty, the obscurity of history, for the other, the diversity of sects; and then insinuating that God has not made any certain communication of his will at all. Let every immortal soul see the necessity of diligent reading, with prayer, for the divine teaching, that he may know the truth as it is in Jesus, and be able to set his seal to the certainty of what God hath spoken; and then it will be easy, knowing what spirit they are of, to resist all such tempters.

The devil, having probably observed some wavering as the effect of his first assault, proceeded to a bolder step, as tempters always do; and in direct opposition to the word of God asserted, 'ye shall not surely die.' If first there was a doubt as to the meaning of that word, there would next be less fear of the threatened punishment; and to a mind that in the smallest swerves from the firm holding of any truth, the most arrant lie against that truth, from whatever lips, will not be without effect. And having thus inspired the hope of impunity, the serpent, with consummate guile, began to reckon the immediate advantages which might be gained by eating of the forbidden tree. 'Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;' and that, too, in the very day that you eat, as God knows; you shall see the most distant things as well as those that are near; things in heaven as well as things on earth; what peoples the remotest star, and what upholds the universe; from which grand sights you are debarred, having your eyes, as yet, but partially opened; and then, as knowledge is power, you will not be subject to God at all, but be his equal. And thus the tempter suggests, that God knowing such wisdom to be the effect of the forbidden tree, had prohibited his creatures from its taste, either because he grudged them so lofty an enjoyment, or was afraid to intrust them with a power that might rival his own.

By these temptations Satan prevailed; and doubtless it was for wise and holy ends that God permitted the success of the enemy's wiles. But see now the woful consequences. The woman having consented to Satan, becomes in her turn a tempter, and prevails with the man, as the serpent did with her. The voice of God, till now their best delight, has become their terror; and on hearing his voice, they think to hide

themselves amongst the trees of the garden. Wretched sinners! is this the amount of your new wisdom? to hide from God! might not He that made the sun take it as a candle in his hand to search those trees; and what then would become of you and your sheltering leaves?

Their fallen and their foolish hearts being darkened, they are called to a reckoning with their Maker; and every answer they gave goes only to show that all truth and wisdom and allegiance are laid in the dust. They own no sin, but seek an excuse by false pretences, and betake themselves to a refuge of lies. What beguiling could there be with regard to a precept so plain? And whilst both offenders shift the blame from themselves, they have the hardihood indirectly to lay it upon God. 'The serpent, that subtle creature of *thy* making; the woman that *thou* gavest to be with me.' When we read such a defence, let us view the deceitfulness of our own hearts; and thinking of a judgment to come, remember that all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

In such frame of spirit, when we see that in all this confession of our first parents, there is no repentance, no truth, no love to God; but ignorance, hardness of heart, and accusation of their Creator; when it is seen that these are the natural consequences, or the concomitants of their first sin; and that the act itself, by which they rebelled, was the violation of a precept remarkably plain, and which, as it respected no moral obligation, being simply a positive injunction, was more obviously, as it was more fit to be, a test of the creature's affiance; and when we perceive that not the earth only, but the universe, was concerned; that if there might be within nature's bounds, any act at once uncontrolled, and contrary to the will of her Founder, the very foundations of nature were shaken to their base; we shall, so reflecting, stand aloof in dread abhorrence of the impiety which cavils at the account of man's fall, on the ground that eating of the forbidden tree was a slight offence.

Let our hearts be humbled. The proofs of our guilty origin we have not only in our Bible; they stand thick around us: the world's history written in blood; idolatry in all lands; death reigning; sin in every soul from the dawn of thought; the sufferings and early demise of tender babes; the testimony of conscience; all conspire to prove the doctrines of man's fall and the reality of the curse that came upon the ground for man's sake. 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' But let our souls rejoice in the gospel promise recorded in this chapter. 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.' When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. He was delivered for our offences; He was raised again for our justification. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. If by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRAYER.

O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who shall not fear thee and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy. Thou art of purer eye than to behold evil; thou art angry with the wicked every day: thine eye is in every place beholding the evil and the good. Who shall stand before thee, O holy Lord God? We have all sinned and done evil in thy sight: we have provoked thee to anger, we have deserved thy wrath; we are less than the least of thy mercies. As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned; who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. What is man that he should be clean? and he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous? Behold thou puttest no trust in thy saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in thy sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water. Every imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?

O Lord, we have destroyed ourselves, but in thee is our help. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people. We are encouraged to come unto thee, because thou art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon thee. We bless thee, O God, for thy gracious promise that 'the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent.' We thank thee, O God, for that early dawn of gospel light; and for all the grace and love which thou hast ever since manifested towards thy church and people. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. May our hearts be united unto him by a living faith, that we may partake of all his benefits. May he be made to each one of us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Let thy blessing accompany all the means of grace with which we are favoured. Bless our

retirement for prayer, and communion with thyself; our meeting around the family altar, our sabbaths, and the services of thy sanctuary; and may thy word not return unto thee void, but be as the good seed sown in our hearts, that it may bring forth in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some an hundred fold. We invoke thy care and protection throughout this day. Keep us from every evil work, from proud thoughts, and the snares of the devil. Give us this day our daily bread, contentment with our lot, and thankfulness for all thy mercies. Bless all men. Our heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel, is that they may be saved. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in all the earth as it is in heaven. These our prayers we offer up in the name of thy Son, our Saviour. Hear, O Lord, and do for us above all that we can ask or think, for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRaise—PSALM XXXII. 5.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW III.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The Bible being a history of God's church, and a record of the divine will, has small regard to man's curiosity. The gratification of this would, in a human composition, naturally be a first object; in the sacred scriptures it is evidently the last. Of such glorious persons as Christ and John the Baptist it would be interesting to know many things concerning their early days; but whilst the preceding chapter speaks only of the Saviour's infancy, this begins with a time when he is nearly thirty years of age; and of John, this Evangelist says nothing, till he presents him preaching in the wilderness of Judea. That was the dawn of a new day in a noisy without vision, and after a night of 300 years without a prophet. Well might the people long for, and much their darkness needed the appearance of Him who was the expectation of Israel, and came to be the light and the life of the world. And as the coming sun sends first a fainter ray, to prepare the eye for the brightness of his coming; so the Lord of glory had in John a forerunner, who, like the modest dawn, bore witness to the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

The description of his person, meanly attired and partly fed, and crying in a desert, was becoming like the preacher of repentance and the herald of a king whose kingdom was not of this world.

Such mortification, not of body but of spirit, and well proved by an earnest and godly sincerity, unlike the mendicant cloak of knavery, too frequently worn, is of great power both to attract the regard and overcome the minds of those, who have the witness of conscience that they are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. And hence, moved partly by

his austerity, and partly by the prophecies going before, together with the evidence of his being a prophet, Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the regions round about Jordan went out to John, and were baptized by him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

That comparatively few of those multitudes did indeed receive Christ, and bring forth the fruits meet for repentance, will be no excuse to us in the day of reckoning. Let our minds be impressed with the necessity of repentance. 'Rend your hearts and not your garments,' was the constant language of the Old Testament prophets. John was sent in New Testament times to declare the same thing; and Christ came to give repentance to Israel and the remission of sins. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and his invitation is, 'come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' But be it well known, that with all the plenitude of his power to save, and all the fervour of a love that is stronger than death, and all the pity of a brother, touched with a feeling of our infirmities, he declares of all men, whatever be their virtues, or their rank, that 'except they repent, they shall all likewise perish.' Let no man deceive himself: this is the Lord's word, and He is judge, and will show in the judgment that His word shall stand. It is no formal repentance that is enjoined by the forerunner of Christ; but that which is proved to be genuine by its proper fruits: 'bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance.' And of this work of repentance there must be no delay; for the axe is laid to the root of the tree. Wherefore let no impenitent soul look for safety under the impending stroke; for every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.

It is a great encouragement to this repentance, and to a cordial reliance on Christ, that He is at once so condescending and exalted; so careful to fulfil all righteousness, and so witnessed in his baptism, by the opening of heaven, the descent of the Spirit, and the voice of His Father: saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Beloved of God, because He was faithful as a Son, and wrought so great salvation for us; and shall we not love Him with all our hearts, as the most amiable being ever presented to the eyes of men; and who in His love, and in His pity, laid down His life for our sakes. The opening of the heavens showed that they were no longer as a canopy of brass over the prison house of a guilty and godless world; but that a way was opened, that as the eye of God followed his Son in His exile, it would rest with complacency on all who should embrace Him; and as the Spirit descended on Him it should descend also on us, that He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified might be all of one; and He their Lord not ashamed to call them brethren. The Spirit is holy, and the dove-like figure betokened peace. Let us follow peace with all men, and holiness; without which no man shall see the Lord.

PRAYER.

We bless thee, O God, who at sundry times and divers manners didst speak, in time past, unto the fathers by the prophets, that thou hast

in these last days spoken unto us by thy Son. Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious, long-suffering, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. Thou art good to all, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works. There is none holy as the Lord, for there is none beside thee; neither is there any rock like our God.

We have all sinned and come short of thy glory. We have forsaken thee, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out to ourselves, cisterns; broken-cisterns, that can hold no water. Alienated from thee by wicked works, we have followed our own devices, and deserve to be filled with the fruit of our doings. Receiving from day to day the gifts of thy providence, and hearing the calls of thy gospel, we have lived unmindful of thee, and have neglected the great salvation. Lord, what shall we render unto thee, for the gift of thy Son, and all the goodness thou art making to pass before us? Yea, rather, what shall we answer unto thee, for the mercy we have despised, and the grace we have received in vain? All souls are thine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is thine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. Out of the depths would we cry unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear our voice; let thine ear be attentive to the voice of our supplications. Thou hast promised that a new heart thou wilt give us; that thou wilt put thy Spirit within us; and cause us to walk in thy statutes, to keep thy judgments, and do them; yet, for this, thou wilt be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. We ask, O God, and trust in thy grace, that we shall bountifully receive. Give us repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; fill our hearts with that godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of. We have been as sheep going astray; let us now, with grief for our sin, and godly sincerity, return unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. May we be owned and accepted in the Beloved; may we be brought nigh by the blood of Christ; may we taste and see that thou art gracious. Shed abroad thy love in our hearts, that loving thee, we may love thy law, and delight to do thy will; that, waiting upon thee in all thy ordinances, we may renew our strength; that we may lead lives of faith in thy Son; that we may bring forth fruits meet for repentance; and glorify thee in our body, and in our spirit, which are thine.

Bless us as a family, and bless every individual apart; bless our basket and our store, and the fruit of our labour; may our souls prosper and be in health. We would acknowledge,

with gratitude, thy goodness in the day that is past; and now that thou hast drawn over us the shadow of night, we would remember the night of the grave, and the reckoning for eternity. We desire to lay us down in thy fear, knowing that darkness hideth not from thee; to stand in awe and sin not; to commune with our own hearts and be still; to offer sacrifices of righteousness, and put our trust in the Lord. Be with us on the return of a new day. Guide us by counsel while we live, and receive us to thy glory when we die. All that we ask is in the name, and for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LV. 21.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS IV.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

God created not the earth in vain, but to be inhabited. Adam's forfeited life therefore is prolonged, and his seed begin to multiply. But soon, alas, it becomes evident, that he has miserably fallen, and that his children inherit both the corruption and the curse! Observe first, in what *circumstances* the first human family is formed. Every member of it is born beyond the precincts of paradise; and as they grow up to manhood they enter on the toils of a wilderness life. Observe, again, the *character* of Adam's family. It is already manifest, that 'a blessing is in it;' that from the fountain of eternal love, a renewing and healing influence has descended on the hearts of some of its members. Eve devoutly acknowledges God's hand in the birth of her first-born; and Adam maintains God's worship, and trains his sons to the stated observance of it. But even their worship discovers their sin and guilt. Cain is heartless and proud, wanting in the reverence which befits the creature, and in the contrition which becomes the sinner, before the high and holy God. Abel offers unto God a more excellent sacrifice—a lamb of the flock, expressive of conscious guilt and deserved death, and of his hope of mercy only through atoning blood. Therefore, God who giveth grace unto the humble, has respect unto Abel and his offering, probably sending fire from heaven to consume it. But unto Cain and his offering he had not respect; for God knoweth the proud afar off. How blessed is the experience of Abel: being justified by faith he has peace with God. What a wretch is Cain! he burns with wrath, when he should have been subdued into godly sorrow; directs that hatred against God, which should have been directed against his own ungodly deeds; and nurses his malice and envy against his brother, whose righteous works, and gracious acceptance, ought to have furnished a pattern and encouragement to his own repentance. And O how appalling the fruit of his wounded

pride and his cherished hatred. It breaks out in murderous violence, and the earth opens her mouth to receive his brother's blood. Alas, what dispeace, and distrust, and sorrow, had already invaded this first family, whom God's law, if kept, would have knit together in bonds of love and peace.

Do we mourn the fate of righteous Abel, and brood over the mysterious providence which suffered him to be slain? But, is not his death happy and honourable, who, by whatever means, dies in peace with God? who dies for the sake of righteousness? and whose death has distinguished him as the first of martyrs, and the first of redeemed and saved sinners in heaven? Why should it be thought a mystery, that when ripe for their change, however early in life, men should be taken away to enjoy God?

Much rather may we pity the life of Cain. Alas, he lives a vagabond on the earth, the victim of agonizing remorse, yet of obdurate impenitency; striving to flee from God; to forget the memory of his sin, and to exclude the anticipation of the judgment when God shall make inquisition for blood. How bitter and deadly are the native fruits of sin in the first-born of men. How infinite our obligations to converting or restraining grace, which keeps in check the evil passions of our fallen nature, and prevents the world from being turned into a field of blood.

Cain's family multiply and learn of their father his evil ways. Yet, though debased in morals, they are skilful both in the useful and elegant arts which minister much to earthly enjoyment, but are little helpful to the higher ends of our moral and immortal nature. There is great obscurity in the speech of Lamech. But it plainly intimates, that deeds of blood were not unknown, and that lighter sins already abounded among the posterity of Cain. Why?—may some ask—Why was not righteous Abel preserved to raise up a godly seed? For this, among other reasons, that God might show that he is not dependent on any; that though Abel die, God shall not be without a seed to serve him. Hence, Seth is born to fill the place of Abel, and is made the father of a pious family, to revive the neglected worship, and to testify for the rightful honours, of their God.

PRAYER.

O Thou who wilt be sanctified in all them that draw nigh unto thee, enable us, on the return of the hour of prayer, to approach the footstool of thy throne with true hearts, and with unfeigned faith. We know that thou hearest not sinners, and how then may we hope that thou shouldest hear us when we call upon thee? We do not forget, O God, that we are sinners in thy sight—that we are the degenerate children of a fallen father; by nature, children of disobedience, and therefore children of wrath. Yet from the beginning thou hast been known as the Hearer of prayer. Thou hast had respect to the persons and offerings of men, born under sin,

even as we: and we believe, that we too may be saved, even as they. O thou God of grace and salvation, assist and direct us to come in the spirit of thine accepted worshippers. We plead the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world; over it we confess and bewail our guilt; and on the ground of its all-atoning merit, we entreat thee to receive us graciously, to heal our backslidings, to love us freely. Having an High Priest over the house of God, even Jesus, the Son of God, we long to have all the distrust of guilt dispelled, and all the distance to which it has driven us from thee overcome, and our minds filled with the peace of God, and restored to a life of communion with thee. Mercifully deliver us from the dominion of sin, from the unbelieving and impenitent heart, from the proud, and envious, and uncharitable spirit, and from every forbidden and fatal way. Enable us to cultivate obedience to thy good and holy law. Clothe us with humility; open our ear to thy rebukes. Make us truly penitent for all our sin. Replenish us with all the graces of the Spirit, and let us be filled with all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and the praise of God.

Thou God of all the families of the earth, and of those families especially who call upon thy name, be thou the God of this family. O that we were all united in the same mind and in the same judgment, that family affection may continue and increase; that not one of all this domestic circle may live as an alien from God, and a stranger to those Christian sympathies which at once hallow and endear the bonds of social life. May one and all of us have one faith, and be found, in all our intercourse, adding to our faith, godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity.

O Lord, let the blessed power of Christian love gather strength and prevalence throughout this fallen world. Let all enmity between man and man be slain by the power of the cross. Let Jew and Gentile be united in the bond of Christian brotherhood. Let all divisions in thy church be healed, and let all, with one mind and one mouth, unite in ascribing salvation unto Him who hath redeemed us out of all nations by his own blood.

We unite in presenting to thee our thanksgivings, for our preservation to another day. Let us all this day live as becometh brethren, in unity. Keep us from all evil, help us in all our duty, and preserve us all by thy power unto eternal life, through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM xcvi. 1.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW IV.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Jesus, the beloved Son of God, knew no sin, and could not be tempted with evil. Still, it was both possible and important, that he should endure temptation. It served to prove and display his character, as the holy One of God: to evince his power, and to advance his cause, as the conqueror of Satan, and the destroyer of his works; and to accomplish or perfect him as the Captain of salvation, and the faithful and merciful High Priest of his people, who having himself suffered, being tempted, might be able to sympathise with and to succour them that are tempted. Wherefore, he was led of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil. There is a deep and awful mystery in this experience of the Son of God. Yet there is much precious instruction and comfort in it. It shows us that temptation is under divine guidance, and the tempter himself subject to divine control—that when God gives grace he will try it—that with the disciple, as with his Lord, seasons of most signal privilege may generally prove the precursors of severest trials; and that the desolate wilderness, and the lovely Eden; the mountain solitude, and the crowded city; the consecrated temple, and the mart of merchandise, equally admit and invite their approach. First, the devil finds the Saviour fasting, and tries, through the medium of his hunger, to provoke him to impatience, and insinuate distrust of God's paternal care and love. Finding him immovable in his filial confidence and submission, he next tries, on the ground of God's promised and confided protection, to urge him to the opposite extreme of pride and presumption. And when this also has failed, as a last and desperate effort he offers him the kingdoms of the world, which he came to redeem as his inheritance, by his blood, for the easy but forbidden tribute of an idolatrous homage. It matters nothing to this enemy of souls, through what means he can prevail. It is enough for his malignant purpose, if he can entice to sin in any form, whether through our privations, our privileges, or our prospects; by the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eye, or the pride of life. But the prince of this world had nothing in Jesus. With holy abhorrence and with triumphant power, he repelled each successive assault, until, baffled and discomfited in all his wiles, the devil left him. And mark the weapon with which the Saviour overcame. It is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. *It is written—it is written—it is written*; introducing the appropriate scripture, used in assured faith, was his sole, but his effectual defence. This armour of heavenly proof has been bequeathed to us. Let us use it after Christ's example, and in our hands, as in his, it will prove mighty through God to repel all the darts of the wicked, and to make us partakers of the Saviour's victory.

While Jesus is thus assaulted by the old serpent, John the Baptist is persecuted by the serpent's seed.

Herod added this to all his other sins, that he shut up John in prison. On hearing of this deed of enmity against God's cause and kingdom, Jesus withdrew to the remote parts of Galilee, which were under the jurisdiction of Philip, a milder and more tolerant prince. Into these regions which sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, Jesus, as Isaiah (ix. 2.) had foretold, carried the light of his gospel. He preached repentance, which is gospel doctrine, glad tidings of great joy to sinners. Here he began to call his disciples. Their ready obedience to his call displayed his kingly power, while their humble condition intimated that his kingdom should not be of this world, not built by human might and power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. Here, too, he cast out many devils, and healed all manner of sickness and disease among the people; thus confirming his high claims, and illustrating the grace of his kingdom as founded on the overthrow of satan's power, and effectuating the pardon and blessedness of his saved people; while the multitudes flocking to him from every quarter, gave happy omen and earnest of his future universal triumphs, when all nations shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed.

PRAYER.

O Thou who art holy, who dost abhor all sin, and with whom evil cannot dwell! wherewithal shall we appear in thy presence? We are prone to evil. Like our first father, we have been more ready to give ear to the false and unholy suggestions of satan than to give heed to thy words of truth, and thy precepts of holiness. Alas, we have given place to the devil, and, but for the riches of thy mercy and forbearance, might, ere now, have had part in his condemnation. With our whole hearts would we bless thee, O Lord, that thou who sparedst not the angels which sinned, but didst cast them down to hell, hast been mercifully pleased to spare us; that thou hast sent thy beloved Son into the world to destroy the works of the devil; to redeem us from guilt, and sin, and death, and hell; as the fruit of his victory, to restore our right to the tree of life, and by the power of his grace to prepare us anew for the paradise of God. O thou who art the God of all grace, suffer not that our hearts should be insensible to that unsearchable love which prompted the errand of thy Son into the world, and sustained him all through his life of deep humiliation and manifold temptations. Let not one among us continue in league with satan, and at enmity against God and his Christ. Recover us out of the snare of the devil. Enable us to wield the sword of the Spirit after the example, and in the strength, of the Lord Jesus. Amid straits and difficulties, help us to possess our souls in patience, and to hold fast our confidence in thy faithfulness and love. In circumstances of outward pros-

perity, and in the experience of spiritual privileges, let us not be high-minded but fear; and whatever prospect of advantage be set before us, let us be strong to resist or refuse it, when its acceptance would require unfaithfulness to thee. Vouchsafe to us severally, an interest in all the grace of Christ's kingdom. Bring us out of darkness into thy marvellous light. Make us willingly obedient, and cordially devoted to thy service. Cause us to experience, and help us to exemplify, the precious fruits of thy Spirit, in our release from the dominion of all sin, and in our gradual advancement in the health, and vigour, and maturity of the spiritual life.

We pray for the downfall of satan's kingdom; give unto thy Son the heathen for his inheritance, and all the kingdoms of the world for his possession. Unto Him let every knee bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Be thou the light and defence of all dear to us. Be especially gracious to this family. Let all under this roof abide under thy shadow. We offer our grateful thanks for thy care over us throughout the day. We ask thee to blot out the sins of the day—all our sins, in the blood of the Lamb of God. We commit ourselves to thy faithful keeping throughout the night, and would desire to be preserved by thy power, through faith unto everlasting life. And unto the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS VI.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Men do not improve, but degenerate as they multiply on the earth. When sinners abound, seductions to sin are more powerful; restraints upon it more feeble; the power of conscience is more apt to be overborne, and even a regard to character to be cast away amid the urgency of besetting temptations and evil example. Thus evil men and seducers wax worse and worse. How disastrous this effect of evil communications on the sons of Seth! For their piety they had been distinguished by the name of 'sons of God.' But alas! for the instability of human goodness; instead of withstanding and restraining the rising tide of corruption, they are borne before it, and already mingle with, and swell the torrent. From early habit, and for the sake of family distinction, they might still maintain a form of godliness; but, their marriage with the ungodly was the effect of existing,

and the cause of an increasing degeneracy; 'they were carnal and did walk as men,' and were soon too sure to fall away from all their distinctions as the sons of God. These ungodly alliances, formed in a breach of consistency on the part of God's professing people, embarrass and enfeeble all subsequent efforts to maintain a consistent piety; they hinder family religion, they divide and impair parental influence, and unsettle or subvert the principles, and enfeeble or destroy the character, of a succeeding generation. Either they are a snare or a cross, for how can two walk together except they be agreed? For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Wherefore be not unequally yoked with the unbelieving or ungodly. The effects of these unequal unions in the sons of Seth may well dissipate all the delusions by which the flesh pleads for them, in so many of the seeming and sincere children of God. They increased unto more ungodliness. The sons of God being thus joined to the daughters of men, the whole family of men are become 'flesh,' one unmingled mass of corruption. God's Spirit, long resisted, had all but ceased to strive with man; and the poisoned fountains of fallen nature being no more healed and purified by the infusions of His grace, sent forth only polluted streams. What a sight now meets the eye of God when he looketh upon man; his heart in its inmost thoughts 'evil, only evil, always evil;' and how mournful and humiliating the fruits of it, as realized universally in his character and experience. The earth is filled with corruption and violence; all are become enemies to God, and to one another; and gross ungodliness, and hateful selfishness, and oppression, and cruelty, lay waste both the virtue and the happiness of the human family.

As God beheld this sad degeneracy, it repented God that He had made man, and it grieved Him at the heart. This is spoken after the manner of man. God's omniscient mind and infallible purpose preclude his literal experience of such disappointment and regrets as are here expressed. But it intimates how deep and dreadful is the ruin which sin has wrought on the work of God. Behold, says He, the end of all *flesh* is come before me; 'He that made them will not have mercy on them, and He that formed them will show them no favour.'

Amid this crooked and perverse generation, Noah alone is found just, and sincere, and faithful; like Enoch, he walked with God, in the peace of reconciliation, in the paths of righteousness, and in the privilege of communion with God. God therefore 'who giveth *more* grace,' shows favour to him—and, agreeably to the great principle on which His gracious covenant proceeds, to his family also for his sake. Wherefore when the world shall be destroyed, righteous Noah shall be preserved. For this end he is commanded to build an ark of safety, in which he may outlive the flood; and though the work was great, and the time long, and the trial of cruel mockings was severe and painful, yet, true to his character, according to *all* that God commanded him, so did he. 'By faith, Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, whereby he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by

faith.' Let us follow in the footsteps of Noah, while now the long-suffering of God waiteth as in his day; let us flee to the refuge which is set before us in the gospel, that when the threatened flood of fiery indignation shall sweep over the earth, we may be sheltered from its fury, and preserved in Christ Jesus, as in the ark—to that new heavens, and that new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

PRAYER.

O thou who art infinitely blessed in thyself, and art absolutely independent of any or all thy creatures; we wonder and adore, when we contemplate the riches of thy forbearance and long-suffering towards a world that lieth in wickedness. Alas! what a world of iniquity does thine all-seeing eye continually behold, to offend thy purity and provoke thy judgments. How much have we, thy professing people, lived as the children of disobedience; we have followed the multitude to do evil, we have conferred with flesh and blood, and instead of living to glorify thee, the God in whom our breath is, we have loved to fulfil the desires of our sinful hearts. Adored be thy patience which has borne with us amid these manifold provocations—adored be thy grace and mercy which has provided for us a great redemption, and doth invite us still to the free and welcome participation of its blessings. O God, let not any of us abuse thy patience and despise thy grace. Let the interposition of the Son of thy love to save us, rouse our secure and our careless minds, and melt and subdue our hard and rebellious hearts. Let thy love constrain us to live not unto ourselves but unto Him who loved us, and gave himself for us; instead of walking after the course of this world, we may be as the sons of God, without rebuke, walking with God, holding fast our integrity, following submissively and obediently the leadings of thy Holy Spirit, and willing to stand out from the ways, and to bear the scorn and enmity, of the ungodly world, provided only we may have this testimony, that we please God.

O thou whose name is called upon by us, the Covenant God unto whom we have been baptized, let it please thee to unite us all as indeed the children of thy covenant, and the heirs of its sure mercies. Let the ties of nature be hallowed and endeared by the bonds of grace. Let the heads of this house be united in the Lord. Let the children of the family rise up before thee a holy seed, who shall be to the Lord for a generation; and let all our family intercourse, in all our several relations, promote the growth of our Christian character, and prepare us for holier and more blissful communion together, as members of thy blessed family in heaven.

O God, let the wickedness of the wicked be brought to an end; not again, if it please thee, by the destruction, but by the conversion and salvation of the world, by the power of thy Spirit, and by means of thy gospel. Let the righteous flourish and abound; let the nations be made subject to the reign of Messiah. We bless thee, Lord, that thou art prolonging our day; while the day of life lasts, let us spend it for thee. O God, we would walk with thee, we would cleave to the way of thy precepts; we desire to be guided by thee in the way of life. Hear us, O God, in these our prayers, for the sake of Him who is the Mediator of thy better covenant. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 11.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW v. 1—26.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

This sermon Jesus delivered near Capernaum. Though spoken in the hearing of the multitudes, it was addressed directly to His disciples, whom it especially concerns. It opens with Christ's doctrine of happiness, a subject attractive to all ears, and to all hearts, and deserving of all attention, when treated by the great prophet of God, and the gracious friend of man. Those whom he declares blessed, are not such as the world admire or imitate, but, as appears from his description, such rather as they dislike, and despise, and persecute. They are the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the merciful, the persecuted and the reviled. This may seem a paradox, but these are the truly blessed. 1. The characters they exhibit are not the gifts of nature, but of grace; the effect of God's special blessing, and the pledge of their signal blessedness. 2. Their characteristic dispositions, and desires, and affections are the *elements* of blessedness; meekness of temper, mercifulness of disposition, purity of heart, faithfulness to conscience, are not more expressive of virtue than of happiness. 3. Though, in some instances they involve suffering, yet, in every instance they *tend to*, and *prepare for*, blessedness. They that mourn for their own sins, and they who suffer persecution from love of righteousness, or from fidelity to Christ, are in the sure and the only way to the sweetest and sublimest blessedness—the blessedness of the pardoned sinner, and the perfected saint! And lastly, these tendencies towards perfect blessedness are in *no way liable to disappointment*; for all these capacities and desires of the renewed nature, God has provided the appropriate object in His kingdom of grace or of glory, and the Saviour has declared that in the timely bestowment of it their blessedness shall be full. Let us learn hence that *character is fundamental to happiness*; that our efforts to find it in outward good are misdirected, and that they are best bestowed in cultivating the graces of the inner man, without

which, nothing on earth or in *heaven* can make us truly blessed.

The disciples of Jesus, formed into this character, and fitted for such blessedness, are destined to signal use and honour in the world. 'Ye are the salt of the earth;' that is, the moral conservatives, who preserve it from corruption and ruin, and diffuse among its families the savour of grace and godliness. But this influence, be it observed, belongs only to the vitality and strength of the spiritual character; when Christians degenerate into lifeless formalists, their influence over others is lost: and beyond others they become despicable in character, and desperate in condition. 'Ye are the light of the world.' They are so, because they are light in the Lord; and having received His light, not to conceal, but to reflect and diffuse it; they should feel concerned not for self-display, but for the good of men, and for the glory of God, to manifest and commend the light to all around. O! did all professing Christians perform their appointed part, soon should our dark and sinful world be pervaded with the light of truth, and seasoned with the grace of holiness, producing blessedness among men, and blessing and glory to God.

In order to guard his character, while he asserts and exercises his office as a divine teacher, Jesus next explains the object of his coming. This was not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; not to destroy it, for it is more stable than the ordinances of heaven and earth; not to relax it, for he demands the observance of the least, as well as the greatest, of its commandments;—but to fulfil it, for he requires a righteousness in principle, and spirit, and extent, far exceeding that which was maintained or taught by the strictest religionists of that day. In illustration of these truths, he proceeds to expound the law. He begins with the sixth commandment, as it was spoken to the fathers. This was understood by the Pharisees to forbid the deed of murder; Jesus interprets it as forbidding every word or feeling, which as proceeding from, and expressing hatred of a brother, violates the great principle of the law; and exposes the transgressor not only to the penalties of human courts, but to the danger of hell-fire. Who but may now cry out, Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O my God. Of this doctrine our Lord, ver. 23—25. makes a practical application: first, in regard to an offended brother, next in regard to an injured and angry adversary. As if to live at variance with either, were such a violation of this law as prevents our acceptance in worship, and provokes our subjection to condemnation, he admonishes to a speedy reconciliation and agreement with all who have taken offence at us, or to whom we have given it. How should this enforce the apostle's admonition, Be kindly affectioned one to another, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any; even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.

PRAYER.

Thou God of peace, who hast turned away from us all thine anger, and dost invite us, through the blood of the cross, to approach thy throne of grace and blessing; forbid that, when

we thine offending creatures come before thee to implore thy forgiveness, we should exclude our prayer by refusing forgiveness to any who may have offended us. Enable us to lift up holy hands unto thee, without wrath and doubting, and to pour our hearts in the confidence of love. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath sent Him to bless us, to procure all blessings for us, by the blood of his cross, to proclaim them in the word of his gospel; and to dispense them from the throne of his kingdom. O Lord, let us be blessed in Him; grant that thy Holy Spirit may produce and perfect in us all the lovely character of thy blessed people. Make us lowly and contrite in heart, as becometh sinful creatures; let the desires of our souls be after righteousness; imbue our tempers with the meekness and gentleness of Christ; let us be merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful; make us pure in heart, peaceable in demeanour, upright and faithful in our uniform conduct; resolved in thy strength to suffer rather than to sin, and able to rejoice if counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. O that we were effectually taught of Jesus that they are the truly blessed who are thus renewed by the Spirit into the mind of Christ, that, to acquire, and to increase in this blessedness, we were quickened to the daily cultivation of all the spiritual graces; and that we might so largely possess, and so vigorously exercise, and so visibly exemplify them, that those who see us might acknowledge that we are the seed whom the Lord hath blessed!

O God, cause the light of Christian truth and holiness to spread speedily throughout this dark world; cause the power and energy of thy Spirit's grace to work mightily in recovering it from that moral corruption which has so deeply infected it. Let thy blessing rest on our country; revive, and purify, and prosper thy church at home and abroad; comfort the mourner, sustain the persecuted, give repentance to sinners, and salvation to the dying. Be the God of this family; let ours be the blessedness of the people whose God is the Lord. We resign ourselves to thy charge, imploring thy pardon of all our sin, and thy protection from all evil; while we live let us be blessed in the graces of thy Spirit; when we die make us blessed with the glories of thy kingdom, and to thy name be all the glory, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVII. 16.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS VII.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

As judgment is God's 'strange work,' it becomes the duty of men sedulously to improve, and long and deeply to remember every interposition of providence which bears the character of an evidently punitive infliction. The stupendous and unparalleled event recorded in this chapter is sufficient to proclaim, to the latest ages, the awful danger connected with irreligion, impenitence, immoral and sensual indulgence, the neglect of divine warnings and reproofs, and a wide-spread deterioration of principle, and corruption of manners. Accordingly we find Christ, more than two thousand years posterior to this era, referring to the history of the flood, and the unprepared state of that wicked generation whom it swept away, as illustrative of the deeply infatuated security which shall mark the final age of the world. 'And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark; and the flood came, and destroyed them all.'

The forbearance of God is strikingly manifested, even to the last, towards this impenitent generation. After 120 years of long-suffering and mercy had been extended to them in vain, still seven days are added, to afford them a final opportunity for repentance.

Amidst the swelling surges and the dark confusion of the destroying deluge, God did not leave himself without a witness that He is gracious; and faith, fixing her eye upon the ark that sheltered the remnant ordained to be saved, as it still rises above the waters, and rides in safety through the terrors of the all-embracing inundation, can sing of mercy and judgment on this portentous and deeply solemn occasion, 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.'

The preservation of Noah and his family in the ark is a beautiful and instructive type of the salvation of the people of Christ, who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel. And accordingly the faith of this patriarch, who 'being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house,' is commended to the adoption of all, in reference to their eternal interests, and the great duty of complying with the calls of divine mercy. 'Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.' 'Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord

Almighty.' 'And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noe, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him.'

PRAYER.

Almighty and most gracious God, the creator and preserver of the universe, in whom we live and move and have our being: enable us, we humbly pray thee, to worship acceptably at the footstool of thy throne of mercy with reverence and with godly fear. Thou dwellest on high, yet hast thou regard to the lowly, and with that man wilt thou dwell, who is of a humble and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at thy word. We adore the infinite holiness of thy nature, and the perfect rectitude of thy government, and confess that our iniquities have justly subjected us to a state of condemnation, misery and death. It is of thy mercies, O Lord, that we have not been utterly consumed, because thy compassions fail not. We bless thee that thou hast provided for us, in the infinitude of thy love, an all-sufficient Saviour, who becomes, to all who receive Him, a refuge from the storm, and a hiding place from the tempest—a river of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. May we be enabled, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to believe in Jesus to the saving of our souls; and to realize all the benefits which belong to those who have an interest in his perfect righteousness and all-prevailing intercession.

O God, give us grace to escape from the corruptions that are in the world, and to maintain a walk and conversation becoming the gospel. Incline our hearts to thy testimonies, that we may not be ensnared and defiled by the examples

and counsels of those who err from thy statutes, and who are treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and perdition of ungodly men. Deliver us from the wickedness of our own hearts, and may sin no more reign over us; but having our souls enlightened and sanctified by thy truth dwelling in us, may we bring forth the fruits of righteousness which are through Jesus Christ, to thy praise and glory.

We bless thee for thy holy word, which is able to make us wise unto salvation. O grant that being warned to flee from the wrath to come, we may be induced to imitate the faith of thy servant of old, by entering within the ark of the new covenant, and living in preparation for an approaching eternity. May we be followers of them who having walked in faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises. May neither the enticing pleasures, nor the dismaying trials of a passing world, so engross our minds as to turn us aside from that narrow path which conducts to the mansions of everlasting bliss. Strengthen us, O God, that we may endure, as seeing thee who art invisible. And at last, having fought the good fight, and finished our course, and kept the faith, may we receive from thy hand the crown of righteousness, which is laid up for all them who love thine appearing. And now, to the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLIX. 5.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW v. 27—48.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The purity and spirituality of the law of God are exhibited in this discourse, in a manner peculiarly instructive and impressive. The prevailing sin of the people of the Jews at this period, consisted in making void the law of God by their traditions, and in entertaining inadequate and defective views in regard to those religious and moral duties, the obligation of which they continued to allow. Thus, the law of chastity was interpreted as if it forbade only gross and heinous acts of lewdness and wickedness; and as if the heart, with its thoughts and affections, were wholly exempted from its control. In opposition to this, our Lord taught that this and every other commandment had a primary bearing upon the secret movements of the inner man; and that it is necessary, in the work of a sincere and thorough repentance, to go to the root of the evil, and make the heart good, before it can be possible to give to the divine law that spiritual and holy obedience which it essentially requires.

The principle of giving a full, unreserved, and unconditional compliance to the will of God, in contradistinction to those sinful and often capricious limitations and exceptions, which the doctrines of the scribes and pharisees recognised and sanctioned in matters of duty, constitutes the subject which our Lord inculcates throughout the sequel of the chapter. He forbids all tampering with oaths, all idle and profane swearing, all use of any form of appeal or invocation, to whatsoever object addressed, in testimony of the truth and sincerity of what we say,—as utterly inconsistent with that profound reverence for the character and perfections of God, which we ought ever to cherish in our minds. It was to check the furious and ungovernable passion of revenge that our Lord delivered those precepts, enjoining the duty of forbearance and meekness under injurious treatment. We are not 'to render evil for evil,' not to foment strife and irritation, not to indulge in revengeful retaliation, even against the most insolent and malicious enemies. At the same time, nothing that is here delivered can be construed into a permission to allow malefactors to pursue their injurious practices with impunity. Civil rulers are ordained to be a terror to evil-doers, and to afford protection, in all important matters, to the well-disposed and peaceable members of society. Yet, the precepts of the gospel forbid the making use even of the authority of rulers, for purposes of revenge; and if there be a law on the statute book of a Christian commonwealth which admits of being perverted to such an unholy purpose, it ought to be corrected or abolished. A creditor ought not to be allowed to harass an obnoxious debtor by prolonged imprisonment, with a view to soothe the feelings of exasperation produced by a sense of the loss or injury incurred by his negligence or fraud. We are to bear with many wrongs rather than to take any cognisance of them whatever; but when they are of that important and serious nature, that they should not be suffered to pass neglected, we ought to leave the matter in the impartial hands of public justice; and still be ready to pity, and if possible benefit the malefactor, whilst we acknowledge the justice of his conviction, and the propriety of his punishment.

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever blessed God, we implore thy grace to enable us to worship thee, who art a Spirit, in spirit and in truth; and to present the homage of our sincere thanksgiving, adoration, and praise, at the footstool of thy throne of mercy. All thy works praise thee, and all thy saints bless thee. The heavens declare thy glory, the firmament showeth forth thy handiworks; day unto day uttereth speech, night succeeding night, teacheth knowledge of thee.

To thy preserving care, and unwearied beneficence, are we indebted for being carried in safety through the duties and pursuits of this day; and for being delivered from danger, sickness, and death. Thy goodness is new to us every morning, and thy loving-kindness every

evening; great is thy faithfulness. Forgive, we humbly entreat thee, O God, every thing wherein we have offended thee, or violated thy most holy and righteous law, whether in thought, word, or deed, during the course of this day, or of the week, which is now drawing to a close. Teach us to understand the extent, the spirituality, and the purity of that obedience which the scriptures require; and may we be enabled to cultivate that true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. May we delight in thy law, cordially esteeming it as in all respects holy, and just, and good, and as supplying, to every one who reverences and obeys it, a great reward. May we be delivered from the delusion and danger of conceiving that we can ever merit salvation, by our defective and polluted righteousness: and enable us to implore the forgiveness of those sins which mingle even with our best actions, and pervade the whole tenor of our frail and guilty lives. Whilst we receive the law from the lips of Jesus, may we also embrace the salvation which he purchased with his blood: and in endeavouring to make him our example in all his imitable perfections, may we place all our hope for acceptance upon his finished work.

We bless thee for all our mercies and privileges, temporal and spiritual: and desire to feel thy goodness as the rich and exuberant fountain whence they are supplied. May we obtain refreshing sleep during the silent hours of this night, and may we rise up on the return of the Christian Sabbath, with hearts prepared for engaging in the sacred and interesting duties for which it has been ordained. Bless and protect our friends and relatives. Comfort the poor, the sick, the distressed, and the dying. Extend the bounds of the Redeemer's kingdom, at home and abroad: and may the whole earth become filled with the knowledge of thy glory. Hear these, our humble prayers, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SECOND WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM VII. 8.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS VI. VII.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Affliction is often employed by a gracious God, as a means of sanctifying his people; and blessed are they, who, like David, are led to entreat the divine mercy in their distresses, and to express con-

trition for their sins, with unfeigned sincerity and truth. As we are chastened of God, not for his pleasure, but for our profit, that we may become partakers of his holiness; we are encouraged to pray, that He would overrule all our trials and sufferings, for this end; so that they may conduce to our moral and spiritual improvement in this life, and work out for us, hereafter, a far more exceeding, even an eternal, weight of glory. When we receive grace to improve affliction as a call to repentance, and to bear it with patience, as a trial of our faith, we may be assured that the Lord is not rebuking us in his anger, neither chastening us in hot displeasure; that the discipline of Providence is not penal, but merciful, and that, ultimately, we shall have cause to bless God for the painful dispensation. In the season of affliction, it becomes the penitent and the humble solemnly to renounce every sin, and to determine, if restored to health, that they shall abstain from every foolish pursuit and wicked way, which they see cause to deplore. 'Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplication: the Lord will receive my prayer.' The afflictions of David should remind us of the sufferings of Christ, who was, indeed, 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He was wounded for our iniquities, and bruised for our transgressions; the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed.'

What repentance and grief should fill our souls, as we meditate upon the mighty burden of the Redeemer's sorrows. 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherein the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.'

The prayer in the seventh Psalm, evidently represents David, pleading his righteousness, as a type of Christ: for 'He only, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth,' could appropriately propose the condition stated in the 3, 4, and 5 verses. 'O Lord my God, if I have done this, if there be iniquity in my hands; if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me: (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy;) let the enemy persecute my soul and take it: yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.' The resurrection of Christ and his glorious ascension into heaven constitute the infallible evidence of his perfect and unspotted righteousness, and of the infinite merits of his atoning sacrifice and death. His life was not trodden upon the earth, neither was his honour laid in the dust, 'but God raised him up, having loosed the pains of death,' according as the Spirit of prophecy had declared; 'For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell: neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption.'

At the 6th verse the inspired Psalmist, evidently speaking in the person of Christ, prays that God would arise and vindicate his cause against its combined and inveterate enemies. The awful judgments which shall overtake the enemies of the gospel, are

solemnly and minutely described in the following verses. 'God judgeth the righteous, but God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword: he hath bent his bow and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death: he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.'

Knowing these things, how cordially should we pray for the conversion and the salvation of sinners, and of all who in any way oppose the cause of Christ. 'O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end: but establish the just, for the righteous Lord trieth the hearts and reins.'

PRAYER.

Most gracious God, we bless thee for all the goodness, which thou art causing to pass before us from day to day. On thee do we continually depend for life and health, and every blessing which gladdens our lot. We thank thee for thy preserving care during the past night; and that whilst many of our fellow-creatures have slept the sleep of death since we lay down to rest, we have been raised up to the renewed enjoyment of the mercies and privileges connected with the land of the living, and the place of hope. We especially bless thee that we have been spared to see the return of another Sabbath: that day which thou hast ordained, in a particular manner, for thine own worship and glory. O grant that we may be enabled to employ its sacred hours, in subserviency to the great and holy ends for which it has been instituted; and that our Sabbaths on earth may ripen and prepare our souls for the services and enjoyments of that eternal rest, which, hereafter, remaineth for the people of God. Do thou, who at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine this day into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Keep us from all vain thoughts, sinful cares, and worldly imaginations: deliver us from impenitence, formality, hypocrisy, and every secret sin; and may we be enabled so to engage in all the religious services of this day, public and private, that the fruit may be unto holiness, and the end life everlasting.

We bless thee for thine unspeakable gift, Jesus Christ, and for all the treasures of grace and salvation, which are presented to us in the gospel. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. When there was no eye to pity, and no arm to save us, thine own eye pitied us, and thy right hand wrought out our salvation. O God, make us truly grateful for thine infinite mercy and goodness; and enable us to comprehend with all saints, what

is the length, and the breadth, and the height, and the depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God.

And now, that life and immortality have been clearly brought to light by the gospel, may we this day, rise on the wings of faith and contemplation, from earth to heaven, from time to eternity; that we may know what is the hope of thy calling, and what the riches of the glory of thine inheritance in the saints; and what is the exceeding greatness of thy power to usward who believe; according to the working of the mighty power which was wrought in Christ, when thou didst raise him from the dead, and set him at thine own right hand in heavenly places.

Confirm and increase our faith, quicken our hope, animate our love, and invigorate and promote every Christian grace and virtue in our souls. O send forth thy light and thy truth into our hearts, that they may lead us, and bring us into thy holy hill, and thy tabernacles. Prepare our hearts for waiting upon thee, in the ordinances of thy house. Bless the ministers of the everlasting gospel, and may they be workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of God, and giving to every one his portion of meat in due season. May we hear thy truth this day preached to us with faith, self-application, and much spiritual benefit: and wherever two or three shall meet together in thy name, be thou in the midst of them, to bless them, and do them good. O hasten the time when the light of salvation shall visit every land, and when the glad tidings of the gospel shall be declared unto all people. Bring in thine ancient people, the Jews, with the fulness of the Gentiles: that, as there is only one Shepherd, there may also be but one people. And now, let the words of our mouth, and the meditations of our heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength, and our Redeemer. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM VIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS VIII. IX.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

As an intelligent being, before whose view God has spread forth the infinite manifestations of his wisdom, goodness, and power, in the various departments and works of creation, it is peculiarly the duty of man to celebrate the praises of the adorable Author of the sublime and magnificent universe. No em-

ployment can be more elevating and interesting; or more worthy of that rational nature, which enables mankind alone, of all that dwell upon the earth, in the exercise of spiritual contemplation, to rise through nature up to nature's God. The pious mind can find themes of unfailing admiration, gratitude, and praise, in every direction, and will record that the name of the Lord is excellent 'in all the earth;' and recognizing the boundless infinitude of the divine perfections, it will also declare, 'thou hast set thy glory above the heavens.' Our Lord evidently refers to the second verse of Psalm viii. in the 21st chap. of Matt. ver. 16; when the children cried in the temple, saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David;' and when the scribes, displeased at the testimony which they bore to his character and claims, wished them to be silenced; but Christ, on the other hand, approved of their conduct, and said to his enemies, 'Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?' The work of redemption is even more replete with the glory of God, than the structure of the material universe; and if the wonders of the one are calculated to excite the astonishment and praise of all descriptions of persons, not excepting the youngest, or the most ignorant, much more is this the case with regard to the doctrines, promises and blessings, of the other, when the heart has been opened by the influence of the Holy Spirit to understand and embrace them. At the same time, there is a wonderful harmony between the views which nature and revelation present on many subjects; and particularly with regard to the distinguished favour which God has been pleased to manifest towards the human race. We see man, placed at the head of this lower world, and we know, that originally he occupied a still more exalted position, 'being made a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honour.' Now, a similar kindness has been exhibited, in a manner equally conspicuous, though in a degree infinitely more astonishing, in the covenant of grace. There the love of God to man has appeared in providing for him eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, and in calling him to glory, honour, and immortality. How well, therefore, may we say, 'Bless the Lord all his works, in all places of his dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul.'

The ninth Psalm consists of a thanksgiving and a prayer; being composed probably to celebrate some of those victories which David gained over his numerous enemies. The pious example of the king of Israel, teaches us, in all the events of life, to acknowledge God, as ruling among the armies of heaven, and over the inhabitants of the earth; as holding in his hands the reins of universal government; and as ordaining whatsoever comes to pass. In the present state of mingled good and evil, we may not always be able to comprehend the exact designs of Providence in every case; but we know that 'the Lord hath prepared his throne for judgment,' and in the end it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. Let us, therefore, put our trust in God, and 'commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.' For 'he will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of

trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.'

PRAYER.

Almighty and most gracious God, we adore thee, who art glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders, and whose ways are past finding out. Thou hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as a garment: and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. We bless thee for the infinite and unmerited goodness which thou art continually exercising towards us. What are we, O Lord, or what our fathers' house, that thou shouldest deal so bountifully with us. Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as the leaf; and our iniquities as the wind do carry us away. But yet, O Lord, we rejoice that there is mercy with thee, that thou mayest be feared, and plenteous redemption, that thou mayest be sought after. We thank thee for the invitations and promises of the gospel; and we pray that Christ may be made unto us, wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and complete redemption.

O grant that the opportunity enjoyed by us this day, of hearing thy word preached, may contribute to our spiritual improvement and growth in grace; and may constrain us to abound with greater zeal and sincerity, during our future lives, in thy holy service. We desire that we may be not hearers only, but doers also, of thy will: and that, adding to our faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity, we may be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. May an abundant blessing follow the preaching of the everlasting gospel, to all by whom it has been heard; and may there be joy among the angels of heaven, over many sinners, who have been brought to repentance. O grant that the time may soon arrive, when all ignorance, idolatry, and wickedness, may come to an end; and when the earth shall become filled with the knowledge of thy glory, as the waters cover the channel of the great deep. We bless thee for all the mercies temporal and spiritual, we have this day enjoyed. Pardon all our sins, and especially the sins of our holy things. Watch over us this night: keep us from evil; and now to thee, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, we ascribe all praise and glory, and blessing, and honour: and thanksgiving, world without end. Amen

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCIII. 3.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS VIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

It is worthy of notice, that the sacred historian continually acknowledges God, and traces events to his operation. There is nothing in which, generally speaking, uninspired historians more sadly fail, nor is there anything which detracts more from the interest of their writings. The protracted duration of the flood and its gradual disappearance, tried the faith, patience, and submission of Noah and his family, and impressed them with a sense of the exceeding evil of sin, as also of the exceeding holiness and justice of God. The employment of means, in the raven and the dove, to ascertain the state of the earth, shows that God is frugal of his miracles; and never intends to supersede human wisdom. The frequent allusion to the 'seven days,' and the remarkable division of time into weeks, among most heathen nations, plainly point to the revealed account of creation as recorded in the word of God. The same remark applies to the deluge itself. The traditions of a flood are clear and strong in all nations, even the most distant and inaccessible; and so far as the inquiries of modern geology have yet gone, instead of discrediting, they decidedly confirm the authority of scripture and profane history, as regards the same event. The piety of Noah is discovered in his building an altar to the Lord, as soon as he was delivered from the ark, before he had raised any building for his own accommodation. The union of his family in the same service, is a testimony to the obligations of family and social worship; and God's high approbation of such sacrifices is proclaimed in the strong language that he smelled a sweet savour, and that in answer he gave a promise of safety in the blessings of which all subsequent generations continue to share.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us mark the power and faithfulness of God, preserving Noah and his family for above a year in the ark, floating on the face of an impetuous and universal flood; and let us notice his tenderness in remembering though he might justly have forgotten, and abandoned them for their sins. Let us acknowledge God's hand in the various circumstances and events of our lot. It was He who led our patriarch to build an ark, and invited him to enter and shut him in. It was He also who remembered him, and bade the waters to assuage, and at length commanded him to come forth. And it is the same God who compasses our path; ordering all the events of our history, the inconsiderable as well as the great. Let us, like Noah, gladly acknowledge him not merely in words, but in the way of his own appointment, by suitable sacrifices; and let us be aided, in doing so, we shall detract nothing from our true honour; on the contrary, whatever reproach may encounter from the world, we shall add to our brightness, and bring down the best blessings upon our families and even upon posterity. Let us,

in the first instance, care for the glory of God, and He in return will assuredly care for us. Above all, let the burnt-offerings of Noah and God's high approbation of them, remind us of the far nobler sacrifice of Christ, who gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. It was a reference to the Saviour which bestowed upon the offerings of the patriarch their chief significance and value. Dreadful as the deluge was, it was as nothing to that flood of Divine displeasure which was poured out upon Christ, as the surety of sinners. Blessed be his name, he triumphantly rode out the storm; and now all believing and resting on his sacrifice, are as safe as Noah and his family in the ark, under the special protection of Jehovah. Let us look perpetually upon his cross as the bow in the cloud, the pledge of Divine love, the proof that no second deluge shall ever reach us. Great, no doubt, would be the happiness and gratitude of the patriarch and his children, when, after being for a year tossed on the tremendous sea of the deluge, they were safely landed on the washed and renovated earth; and how great will be the joy and praise of the ransomed of the Lord, when, safe from all their enemies, they shall set their feet on the shore of the heavenly country.

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever blessed God; thou art over all. Thy mercy is in the heavens, and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds; thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep; thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy loving-kindness; therefore, the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. We must acknowledge with shame and confusion of face, that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; and that by our many and aggravated offences, we have justly provoked thy high displeasure. Yea, we have added to our guilt in not being warned, as we ought to have been, by the tokens of wrath with which thou hast visited the generation before the flood. We deserve, O Lord, to be overtaken like them with the judgments of heaven; our advantages have been greater, our sin has been more heinous. We admire, most gracious Father, thy long-suffering and faithfulness. How tenderly didst thou remember Noah and his family, and the very beasts of the field. Remember us also, even with the love which thou bearest to thy children, and forgive all our sins, and visit our souls with thy benign salvation. We rejoice in the proofs which thou hast given of thy faithfulness, not only in the deliverance from the ark, but in the regular succession of seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, through so many hundred years. May we remember with comfort, that if thou art so faithful in na-

ture, thou wilt be not less faithful in grace; and that all the promises which thou hast given in connection with thy Son and Spirit, thou wilt most assuredly fulfil to the believing soul. May we therefore, with greater confidence, be induced to acknowledge thee in all our ways, and in dark and trying seasons trust thy paternal protection and love. May the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus be our only hope, and his gospel the olive branch of peace to our souls; and may we be enabled to look forward with growing joy, to the time when there shall be new heavens and a new earth; when there shall be no more curse, when all shall be righteous.

God of ordinances, accompany with a divine blessing, the religious exercises of yesterday. Thou hast all hearts in thy hand, and turnest them as easily as thou turnest the rivers of water. May we ever look up to Thee for the Holy Spirit, and may He, in answer to prayer, be richly vouchsafed, and instruct, and impress, convert, comfort, and sanctify us and our fellow-worshippers, according to our and their respective circumstances and wants. We pray for the church with which we are more immediately connected. Abundantly prosper her undertakings for thy glory and the good of souls, both at home and abroad, and hasten the time when all thy elect children shall be gathered from the four winds into the ark of salvation, and the reign of heaven begin. May these the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, find acceptance with thee, the Hearer and Answerer of prayer, seeing all that we ask is in the name, and for the sake, of our blessed Emmanuel. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW VI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Detailed instruction in duty, is quite consistent with the preaching of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. While Christ dealt so largely in the doctrine of salvation; the better to meet and correct prevailing errors, he descended to minute counsel on alms-giving, prayer and fasting. His exhortations on these points, show how generally corrupt was the state of religion in the Jewish church, even at a period when its members were free from idolatry; and how strong is the tendency to convert religion, which is truly generous, consisting of love to God and love to man, into an instrument of selfishness, for drawing praise upon ourselves. The counsels given in

the duties referred to, all take for granted that the followers of Christ are to practise alms-giving, prayer, and fasting. The Saviour does not slight these, or defer to the objections which have often been started against them. He only condemns abuses and improper motives. It is not even *publicity* of which he complains, for there are cases of charity, prayer, and fasting, which necessarily take place before our fellow-men, and which are commended in other parts of scripture, but it is publicity in order to be seen of men, and not for the glory of God. Though the Lord's prayer does not seem to have been intended to establish a *form* of prayer, and we have no evidence it was used as such by the disciples, yet it is at once a most precious directory and encouragement in prayer. Its brevity, comprehensiveness, simplicity, fervour, and adaptation to our wants, are all admirable, not less so is the instruction which it conveys, both by its order and its sentiments. It reveals the true character of God as a Father; the social nature of prayer; that God's glory in His name, and kingdom, and will, are to be preferred to human happiness; that our temporal wants are entitled to a prominent place in our petitions; that we daily sin and need daily pardon; that we are not entitled to hope for forgiveness from God, unless we cheerfully forgive our fellow-men offending against us, and that we plead the glory and honour of God as the chief reasons why we expect to be heard. The views contained in the Lord's prayer are so exalted and original, that though we had nothing else, the prayer would furnish evidence that the book in which it is found is divine. The exhortations regarding the 'not laying up treasures on earth,' and 'taking no thought for our life,' are not intended to forbid the acquisition of property, or a due attention to the lawful business of the world. They are evidently only designed to repress the supreme love of the world, and that anxious care about it which is at war with the duty we owe to God and to our fellow-men. The arguments in behalf of this course, are drawn from a variety of sources: the instability of earthly treasures; the blessedness of a single eye to the glory of God; the impossibility of serving God and the world; the superior value of what has been already bestowed—pledge, that inferior blessings shall be added; God's providential care over vegetable and animal life; the vanity of solicitude about the future; the unworthiness of distrust of God, on the part of those who have been blessed with a divine revelation; the sufficiency of the evil of the present, without anxiety about the evil of the future; the gracious promise that if men seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness of his Son, they shall receive, by way of surplus, all temporal blessings which are good for them.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How thankful should we be to Christ, for the ample and minute instruction which he has given not only in matters of doctrine, but also of duty; and for his own example, by which he has so impressively illustrated his precepts. Let us beware of selfishness and ostentation in alms-giving, prayer, and fasting, of which the Saviour so justly con-

plains, and pursue these, and all similar duties, from right motives. Let us adore the condescension of Christ, in supplying his followers with a directory for prayer, and rejoice in the multitude of holy desires and affections of which in every age it has been the vehicle. Let us realize the character of God, and the character of man, which it unfolds; and make it our study, honestly to use every petition as our own; especially, let us be impressed with the high importance of a forgiving disposition toward our fellow-men, and remember, that unless we exercise it, every time we use the Lord's prayer, we condemn ourselves. Let us discourage, in ourselves and in others, the undue love of the world, and rejoice in the great variety of motives drawn from nature and reason, as well as scripture, by which the Son of God seeks to wean us from its power. Let us be single-eyed in our aims, and draw from every lily of the field, and every fowl of the air, fresh inducements to trust the care of our Father who is in heaven. Above all, let us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Let us pursue religion in the appointed order, as first in time, and first in importance: and then shall we not only receive a promise of outward blessings, but we shall be kept from those errors and corruptions in religious duties, (such as prayer, and almsgiving, and fasting,) which are fitted to bring reproach upon religion, and deceive our own souls.

PRAYER.

Father of mercies, we thy unworthy servants, desire this evening to come into thy presence, and to lift up our united praises and supplications at thy footstool. Be pleased graciously to assist us, and to accept of our persons and sacrifices, in the name of our great High Priest. We thank thee for all the revelations which thou hast condescended to make of thyself in nature, and providence, and thy word. Especially do we rejoice, that instead of revealing thyself in terrors, thou hast discovered thyself under the endearing and delightful appellation of our Father in heaven. It is thou, O God, who arrayest the lilies of the field, in such beauty as to surpass Solomon in all his glory; and it is the same tender hand which feeds the fowls of the air, which neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns. Wilt thou not then care for us? We bless thy name, that thou encouragest us to draw near to thee in prayer; supplying us with a form of words, and mercifully promising to confer upon us all the blessings of which we stand in need. Give us, we beseech thee, to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. May we not lay up for ourselves treasures on earth which are liable to danger and decay, but treasures in heaven, which neither moth nor rust corrupt, and which thieves cannot break through to steal. May we all possess Christ, the pearl of great price, and may He so

dwell in us, that we shall be delivered from anxious and unbelieving care about things seen and temporal. In duties more directly religious, may we beware of ostentation and vain glory. Whether we give alms, or fast, or pray, grant, most merciful Father, that we may do all unto thee—under the guidance of such motives as thou wilt approve.

God of grace, we pray that thy kingdom may come universally. Visit the dark places of the earth, the habitations of cruelty, with the benevolent light of the gospel. Be especially merciful to those millions of the heathen who live under the British sceptre, our many emigrant brethren abroad, and the multitudes of spiritually destitute at home, for whom the church to which we belong, is making it her care to provide the means of salvation. Every where bless the ministers of the everlasting gospel, multiply their number, and increase their zeal and faithfulness. Abundantly bless the pastor with whose ministry we are connected. Give him largely of the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that feeling the sweetness of religion in his own soul, he may be more enabled to contribute to our spiritual good, and to that of our fellow-worshippers. We desire to conclude our evening petitions in the words which our blessed Lord has taught us to use, 'Our Father,' &c.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 8.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XI. 1—9. and XII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

CHAP. XI. 1—9. The building of the tower of Babel affords a striking proof of the power of human depravity. After all the impressive teaching of the deluge—after the renewed tokens of the divine goodness in making a new grant of the earth to man, and bestowing a fresh dominion over the creatures—after God had commanded Noah and his family to be fruitful and multiply, and had appointed the rainbow as a seal of his covenant—after all these things, such is the weakness even of the best, we forthwith read of Noah's fall; and have no sooner perused the genealogical tables of his sons, before we are called to contemplate their pride and presumption. Fired at once with ambition and rebellion, they resolved to build a great tower and city, by which they might procure for themselves a name, and lay the foundations of a universal empire, and abide together a mighty people. With the utmost facility Jehovah defeated their plans. It is not unworthy of notice, that the researches of the most recent travellers in the East have succeeded in tracing out the ruins of a tower corresponding in description to that of Babel;

while the investigations of the most eminent scholars, such as Sir W. Jones, go to establish the fact, that the various languages of men were once *one*.

CHAP. XII.—The calling of Abraham marks the rise of a new and interesting dispensation of divine providence. Since the fall, God has sought to teach mankind at large through traditional knowledge, and occasional revelations to distinguished servants. Owing to the strength of human corruption, this mode of communicating with man is exchanged for another. God will separate a family, and ultimately a nation, to himself, and make them, in a peculiar manner, the depositories and dispensers of divine truth. Abraham is called from Ur of the Chaldees, and, at seventy-five years of age, leaves his father's house at the simple command of God, not knowing whither he went. This step indicated the exercise of very strong faith. The promise that he, an old man without a son, was to be the founder of a great nation; that all who blessed him were to be blessed, and those who cursed him were to be cursed; and that he was to be the progenitor of Messiah, in whom all nations were to be made glad—has been fulfilled to the letter in the history and present existence of the Jewish nation; in the fate of the heathen which oppressed them; in the fact, that the Son of God was a descendant of Abraham; and that the world has been inexpressibly indebted to his gospel. Like Noah, the Father of the faithful carried his religion into every thing, into the ordinary business of life; and took care not only that himself, but all his family and followers, constituting a little colony, should have the means and opportunity of worshipping Jehovah. Thus did he recognise the obligations under which the head of a house, and the prince of an infant nation, lie to honour the living God. Strong as Abraham's faith was, it was put to a severe test, when the country which he expected to find flowing with milk and honey, turned out to be the victim of famine; but it stood this trial, and doubtless was strengthened by it. Alas! that he should fall under the next; yet so it was. In a selfish, cowardly fear, utterly unworthy of such a man of faith as Abraham, he listened to the temptations of an expediency as foolish as it was sinful, and said to the king of Egypt that his wife was his sister. For this, as soon as the falsehood was detected, he was rebuked by the very heathen. It would seem Jehovah is determined to stain the pride of man; and so he suffers his people to fail in those very graces for which they are most distinguished—the father of the faithful shall sin by unbelief.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

CHAP. XI. 1—9. How awful is the depravity of man! What moral weakness is discovered in circumstances well fitted to animate and strengthen in good! What a serious evil has the confusion of languages proved! How much time and labour have been lost in acquiring foreign tongues! How has diversity of language operated as a barrier to the progress of knowledge, and the triumphs of the cross! Easily does God defeat the schemes of his enemies. They collect their strength to build a great tower which may reach to heaven. He introduces but a little confu-

sion into their speech, and all their plans are frustrated. Let us remember how easy it is for God to punish—to defeat—to overrule; and let us trust his moral government with the greater confidence.

CHAP. XII. Let us be thankful to God for that peculiar dispensation of which Abraham was the head—a dispensation which lasted for 2000 years—which was deeply interesting and impressive in itself—admirably adapted to the circumstances of the world—and which has been the source of unnumbered blessings to mankind, preserving and diffusing that divine knowledge to the faith of which is attached eternal life. Let us stand in awe of the sovereignty of God. He called Abraham not for his good works, or prospective attainments, but of his own free grace, for the manifestation of his divine glory, from the heart of an idolatrous family, sunk in ignorance and sin, without one good quality to recommend; and while God chose him, he passed by multitudes not more guilty than he. Should not the faith of Abraham lead to our imitation. With all the simplicity of a child he took God at his word, confided in him without reserve, and enjoyed the honour and the blessedness of being the Father of the faithful. Let us ever, amid the darkest providences, trust in the faithfulness of Jehovah as our covenant God; and though temporal greatness should be withheld, God will bless us, and make us blessings to others. Let us beware of unbelief. Even the most honoured are not secure against serious backsliding. Let us put no confidence in human wisdom and resources where opposed to the mind and will of God; but study to walk before God perfectly, cherishing a sense of our own weakness, and depending on the promised grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus only we can hope to recommend the truth which we believe, and escape the severe reproach of being reproved for our sins by the very heathen.

PRAYER.

Most blessed God! What God is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to thy works? And well may the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of thee, for thou didst speak and it was done—thou commandedst and it stood fast—thou bringest the counsel of the heathen to nought, thou makest the devices of the people of none effect; but thy counsels, O Lord, stand for ever; the thoughts of thy heart are to all generations. How great is the pride and rebellion of man! How often, alas! do we lift up ourselves against the Lord, and attempt to follow our own way, disregarding thy law and providence, and seeking even to frustrate the purposes of thy grace. Yet how easy is it for thee, O God, to confound and scatter all the schemes of thy rebellious children. Well is it for us that thou dost not abandon us to our waywardness. May we feel truly grateful for thy kind interpositions. We adore the sovereign, we rejoice in the condescending, mercy by which thou didst choose Abraham and his family to be

the guardians and dispensers of thy blessed truth to men. May we approve ourselves sons and daughters, by crediting thy word with the simplicity of children, and going forth to duty, and temptation, strong in the Lord, and in the power of thy might. Forbid we should ever listen to the suggestions of human expediency in opposition to the requirements of thy holy law; may we remember that whilst thou art the God of mercy, thou art also the God of holiness, and wilt not fail to punish sin even in thine own people. May we ever make it our study to walk before the Lord perfectly; and may the Holy Spirit help our infirmities, and in the hour of trial lead us upwards to our compassionate Intercessor.

God of all the families of the earth! be very gracious to the whole body of our brethren of mankind in their varied circumstances and relations. Be especially merciful to thine ancient people, the descendants of Abraham. May the goodness and severity of God lead them to repentance. May they be humbled in the dust for all their offences, particularly for their protracted rejection of thy Son, the true Messiah; and may they behold in Jesus of Nazareth that blessed Seed of Abraham, in whom alone they, and all the families of the earth, can be blessed. May the means which are employed for the conversion of the Jews be greatly extended, and signally honoured by the great and good Shepherd of the flock; and may the time speedily arrive when the confusion of Babel shall be healed, when human language, the repository of words of wickedness, profanity and war, shall give place to one holy, united, and harmonious tongue, even the language of the New Jerusalem. These, our morning requests, we present before thee, entreating a favourable answer, in the name of Him who is our only Hope and Confidence. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW VII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In reading this chapter, one is struck with the severe honesty of our blessed Lord. Many of the topics are highly offensive and irritating to the natural mind; such as the exposure of self-deception and false teachers; and the observations on the danger of missing the way of life, and the disappointment and ruin of a mere religious profession. Had He consulted his own acceptance among men, he would

not have ventured upon such points, and so his conduct upon the present occasion, poor though he was, and surrounded by powerful enemies, may be classed among the internal proofs of the divinity of his mission. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that it is not *all* judgment on the spirit and conduct of others, which Christ condemns: for immediately after he calls upon his people to judge of false teachers; but rash and censorious judgment, which was common among the Jews, and which was then, as it is now, often associated with great self-ignorance and deception. We are not to throw our pearls before swine. Injudicious proceedings are often as hurtful to the cause of Christ, as censorious judgments. Scripture not only instructs in the duty, it also supplies us with the strongest encouragements to prayer. It invites the utmost importunity, and it is illustrated by homely examples, which appeal to every heart, and reveal the character of God in aspects of beauty and tenderness, unknown to false religion. It is sad, that in addition to the corruption within, there should be the addition of man's deception from without; but false teachers there have always been, and ever will be. It is, however, ground of thankfulness, that false doctrine is usually associated with selfish and unholy practices, so that the tree may be known by its fruits. It is not by external distinctions, such as ecclesiastical ordination or religious professions, that false teachers are to be distinguished from the true. It is by the tendency of the system they preach, and their own prevailing temper and conduct. Condescending and tender as the Saviour was, he was faithful in declaring that the mere profession of religion, as distinct from its practice, would not only nothing avail in the great day, but would overwhelm the professor in shame and confusion. This is quite reasonable. Men have no value for an empty profession—why should God? The declaration of Christ, that 'many will say in that day, Have we not prophesied in thy name,' &c., shows that men may go a great way in religion, to the extent of preaching with acceptance in the name of Christ, and even working miracles; and yet, after all, come short of eternal life.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Reviewing the chapter, let us be on our guard against censoriousness in our judgment of others. No spirit can be more injurious to the peace of society, and of the church of Christ, and few more miserable or deceiving to our own souls. Let us never forget the just appointment by which, even in this world, it shall be measured to us according as we mete to others. Great are the scripture encouragements to prayer! The revealed character of God as a Father, and his own warm, and comprehensive, and repeated promise of success, as well as the intercession of Christ in heaven, and the intercession of the Holy Spirit upon earth, all invite to its importunate exercise. How abandoned the heart, how strong the sense of guilt which restrains prayer before God, and will not be moved by his most gracious encouragements. There may be difficulties occasionally in applying the golden rule, but for the great mass of cases, and for the ordinary business of

life, it is a safe and sufficient guide. Let us be thankful to God for it. Let us not be surprised or stumbled, because false teachers frequently appear in the church, under the aspect of the sheep, bearing the character of the wolf. This is no more than what our Lord has taught us to expect. Let us be on our guard, and never fail to bring their doctrine, and character, and proceedings, to the test of God's holy word; and where we have detected, let us shun them. And seeing that many who promised fair, and are highly reputed in the church on earth, shall be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, let us take care that we are among the doers of Christ's word, and not the mere hearers; and with this view, let us be given to watchfulness and prayer, and be contented with nothing short of a consistent, holy life.

PRAYER.

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High! to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night. Blessed be thy goodness for the encouragement which thou hast given us, to draw near to thee in prayer; that thou hast not only said, 'Ask and ye shall receive—seek and ye shall find—knock and it shall be opened to you;' but hast assured us, that as certainly as an earthly parent gives good things to his children, so certainly wilt thou, our Father who art in heaven, give the Holy Spirit to them who ask thee. We rejoice in the promise of the Spirit, and would honour Him, even as we honour the Father and the Son. We would remember his personality and divinity, and the high and glorious offices which he executes, in applying to the souls of men the redemption which Christ hath wrought out. Under his teaching and guidance, may those of us who have not entered the strait gate, now enter it in repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; and under the same blessed guardianship may those who have entered, be persuaded to press forward with increasing diligence and perseverance on the narrow way which leadeth unto life. Most merciful God! forbid that any of us should content ourselves with a mere religious profession; saying, Lord, Lord, while we do not the will of our Father who is in heaven. May we remember that every tree is known by its fruits: and examine ourselves, whether our fruit, our spirit, and temper, and life, be the product of the good or the corrupt tree. May we make it our care to build upon Christ, the Rock of ages, that when the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon the house of our hope, it may not fall, being founded on a rock. And in the meantime, may we prove

the reality of our Christian discipleship, by not only loving the Lord supremely, but by loving our neighbour even as we love ourselves. May we shun rash and censorious judgments, and beware, when marking the mote in our brother's eye, lest a beam be found in our own. May we, in all our intercourse with others, even the unworthy and injurious, be animated by that divine principle of Charity, which suffereth long and is kind, which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

God of love! we lift up our earnest and united intercessions in behalf of all men; in behalf of our beloved country, our Sovereign, and all placed in authority over us. Pour down upon them, and upon all ranks, the spirit of true humiliation for numberless national offences; and turn away from our land merited judgment. Bless the church universal! Bring to a speedy and effectual end the reign of Antichrist, in all its forms of infidelity, superstition, and error; greatly revive the churches of the Reformation, even with a double portion of the spirit of apostolic times, and hasten the glory of the latter days, when Jew and Gentile shall rejoice universally in the rule of Messiah.

Be very gracious, Father of mercies, to our friends and relatives, our benefactors, our enemies. Look in compassion upon the children of affliction, and adapt the communications of thy grace to their necessity: and while ourselves about to lie down and take sweet rest and sleep, may we not forget the hour when we shall be stretched on beds of sickness, and death; and gladly improve our present privileges and opportunities. Hearer of prayer! we present our supplications at thy footstool, entreating an answer, not according to the poverty of our requests, but according to the riches of thy free and sovereign mercy: in the name, and for the sake of thy dear Son, the Lamb who was slain, to whom, with thee, O Father and the Holy Spirit, the triune Jehovah, be ascribed honour and glory, blessing and praise, now and for ever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCII. 1—4.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 4. *The place of the altar.* Altars in these days were rude erections of earth or stone, on which sacrifices were offered. Wherever Abram pitched his tent, he erected an altar to the Lord, and though

surrounded by idolaters, he was neither ashamed nor afraid to worship the true God. In Canaan, before going down to Egypt, he built an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord; and on his return to Canaan, he repaired to the same consecrated spot to renew his acts of devotion. Ver. 7. When Abram was first called, his nephew Lot accompanied him, and they sojourned together till this period. But their substance increasing to such an extent, that the land was not able to bear them, jealousy and contention arose amongst their servants. The cause of the strife might be the encroachments that were made by their respective herdsmen, either on the rich pastures or the wells of water. *The Canaanite dwell then in the land.* That such a spirit of hostility and strife should manifest itself in the view of these natives, who were idolaters, occasioned deep distress to the mind of Abram. Their neighbours taking advantage of their quarrels, might denude them of their property; but what was worse, the name of Jehovah would be blasphemed; the true religion wounded and disparaged. Ver. 10. *Lot beheld the plain of Jordan, &c.* The whole banks of the Jordan were rich and beautiful, but the vale of Siddim, where once stood Sodom and Gomorrah, was peculiarly so. This plain was by divine vengeance transformed into a pestilential lake; but then, it possessed every thing to attract and charm the eye; it was pleasant as the garden of Eden, and fertile as the banks of the Nile. Ver. 15. *To thee will I give, &c.* The promise which God had made to Abram, chap. xii. 7. is here renewed, and in fuller and more explicit terms. Yet, God did not give to Abram, personally, the actual possession of Canaan, for he was a pilgrim and a stranger in it: nor did he give to his seed the perpetual possession of it, for it has now fallen into other hands; still he himself acquired the title to it now by the divine donation, and his posterity took the full possession of it at the appointed time, in virtue of the original promise, and for Abram's sake.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Wherever the people of God go, they will cherish a spirit of prayer; and they will maintain the worship of the true God, even in the presence of enemies. While the wealth of this world cannot purchase contentment and happiness, it is often the occasion of much dispeace, and often severs the strongest ties of friendship and brotherly love. The child of God will always be a peace-maker, and he will make many personal sacrifices to promote and maintain peace and good-will. Many, for the gains and advantages of this world, sacrifice their spiritual privileges, expose themselves to the most dangerous temptations, and thereby hazard their eternal well-being. Those who, in choosing their secular relations, employments, companionships, and settlements, seek not the interests of religion and the weal of their souls, but carnal gratification and earthly aggrandisement, cannot hope for the presence and blessing of God. When men unnecessarily and unguardedly throw themselves into the way of sinners, they are sure to suffer by it. Although robbed of earthly friends, yet nothing can rob us of the presence and friendship of God. In seasons the most threat-

ening, and gloomy, and dark, the soul may have the richest communications from above. 'Man's extremity is God's opportunity.' Whatever were the promises, and the prospects, and the hopes that Abram enjoyed, ours are more cheering, more enlivening, more animating; ours is a richer, more glorious, more abiding inheritance than his. Let us ever set the Lord before us; let us ever raise our altar to our three-one God: then shall his presence be with us, to render every change, every situation in life, a blessed preparation for the heavenly Canaan.

PRAYER.

Father of mercies, and God of all grace and consolation, we come before thee this morning, in the multitude of thy tender mercies, and as a family we would surround our domestic altar, and present to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise. Many, O Lord, are the blessings we are receiving at thy hand. They are new to us every morning, and every evening, yea, every moment of our lives. That we have been protected during the watches of the last night; that we have had refreshing sleep; that we have been permitted to assemble together in circumstances of comfort, is because thy mercy never faileth. Justly, O Lord, mightest thou have made our sleep our death, and our awaking this morning to be in outer darkness; for we have forgotten the Lord that made us, we have overlooked the hand that feeds us, the arm that sustains us; but the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever; his grace never faileth, and thus it is that we are in the land of the living, that we are on praying ground. 'Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits.' Let the goodness, the forbearance, the tender mercies of God, of which we have shared so richly, awaken in our souls the feelings of deep contrition, while they kindle the flame of holy gratitude and love. When thou, Lord, art loading us with thy benefits, and art heaping coals of fire on our heads, let these hard hearts of ours be melted, and let our unfeigned language be, What can we render to the Lord for all his goodness to us?

But we have not merely to thank thee, O gracious Father, for unnumbered temporal mercies, but for the continuance of spiritual blessings and privileges; we have to thank thee for the word of salvation, and for the renewed privilege of pouring out our hearts before thee. We thank thee for all that the gospel reveals and makes known to us: for its doctrines, its promises, its consolations, its hopes. We thank thee for bringing before us the lives of thine own children, that by their fidelity, and constancy, and contempt of the world, we may be encouraged and stimulated: that by their failings and de-

partures from God, we may be warned and deterred. Give us, Lord, we beseech thee, the spirit of the Father of the faithful, who lived as a pilgrim and stranger on the earth, and whose eye was habitually directed to a better country. Guard us against the allurements and temptations of this world, and help us, Lord, to place our affections on the things that are unseen and eternal. Lord, do thou enable us to follow peace, and to seek peace by all means; and may we ever cherish the Spirit and follow the steps of Him who was meek and benignant, and lowly in heart.

We acknowledge, O Lord, our natural proneness to cleave to the dust and to seek a resting place here; we acknowledge that our hearts in their natural state are very enmity to thee, that we are hateful and hating one another; O may thy Spirit be given to change these hard hearts, these carnal inclinations, these worldly desires of ours; that changed, and renewed, and moulded into thine own blessed image, we may live as the redeemed of the Lord, as the expectants of future glory.

Help us, Lord, in our intercourse with the world this day, in our varied duties and engagements, to set the Lord before us, to live as seeing God who is invisible, to keep at a distance from every thing that is sinful, and while we are in the world, and mingle with the world, may we never be of the world. We offer up these our supplications in the name of Him whom thou hearest always, who is our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM xcvi. 10—12.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW viii.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

There being several mighty deeds of Christ recorded in this chapter, it has been called by an old divine, the miraculous scripture. The miracles of Christ were deeds of mercy, and their very character shows the benignity of his heart; but the manner in which they were performed not merely shows that God was with Him, but that He was God; that it was by no delegated power, but by his own inherent might, that the deed was performed; there is such a majesty and authority as bespeaks a present Deity. Christ speaks and it is done; He says, 'I will, be thou clean,' and a cure instantly follows.

There is reference made to various instances of supernatural power, the casting out of devils, and the healing of the sick of every name. These were

plain intimations that Christ was the Son of God. But they were also a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. Jesus appeared in the very time, and place, and manner, sustaining the very character, preaching the very doctrines, and exhibiting the very credentials that the prophets, hundreds of years before, had announced in reference to the coming Messiah; so that it might very justly be asked, 'Is not this the Christ?'

The last recorded miracle in this chapter is Christ's ejection of the devils from the bodies of two unfortunates, and his permitting them to take possession of a herd of swine; and here we are called to notice the recognition, by these evil spirits, of Christ as the true Messiah, who came to subvert their kingdom, and to destroy their works; even Satan himself is compelled to bear testimony to the Son of God. But do the Gadarenes hail his appearance? do they beg him to prolong his stay? do they intreat a further manifestation of his mercy and power? No, they beseech him to depart—they reject him. Christ yields to their wish; He departs from the midst of them, and never do we again hear of his return.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Mark the greatness and the lowliness, the dignity and the abasement of the Saviour in the days of his flesh. He is at once the Son of God, and the Son of man. While all the majesty of Jehovah is displayed in Him, stilling the raging elements, controlling the powers of darkness, awakening the dead from the slumbers of the tomb, who can forbear crying out, My Lord and my God! Yet when we behold the lowly condition of the Son of man, born in poverty, and living in poverty, not having where to lay his head, despised and rejected of men, and that all this, and much more than this, was submitted to by the Son of the Highest, to bring apostate rebels to God, who can forbear exclaiming, 'O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' If Christ discovered such majesty and power, such grace and mercy, while he tabernacled on earth, how deserving is he of our most unlimited trust and confidence. He is able to save to the uttermost; let us put all our concerns into his hands, banish every feeling of doubt, distrust, and fear, and rest persuaded that believing in Christ, all shall be given with Christ, and for Christ's sake. Let us cultivate the spirit of the centurion; deep humility, a consciousness of great unworthiness, an unshaken reliance on the power of the Saviour, and a sincere feeling of sympathy in the distresses of others. Are we, like Christ, more captivated with grace than with greatness? Have we, like him, a higher admiration of gracious principle in the soul of the meanest, than the highest display of earthly grandeur in the state of the most exalted? Faith has never lost, and never will lose its reward. Heathens shall stand up in the judgment against those who have had the offers of Christ and salvation brought near to them, and have rejected or neglected them. Many, under the influence of a momentary feeling, express admiration of Christ, and purpose to follow him without counting the cost; that they

must forsake all, count all things loss, leave father and mother for Christ, yea, take up the cross and follow him. It is only a conviction of great and imminent danger that leads men to cry out in earnest for deliverance. Yet while there is a trembling account of sin, and the earnest prayer, 'Lord, save us,' there must be no distrusting his power, no doubting his willingness, and no disbelieving his promise to save. Unbelief distracts the soul and dishonours the Saviour. The malignity of Satan impels him to seek the ruin of immortal souls; yet it is matter of joy that the legions of hell are under the eye and subject to the control of the Saviour; that they cannot proceed a step beyond what he permits; that a ray of a saint's head they cannot touch but as he allows. You perceive how powerfully the love of the world, love of the gains and profits of this world, operates on many; they would rather lose the presence of Christ, lose their souls, than part with their worldly substance. Awful is the state of that nation, that community, that family, that soul that seeks Christ to depart, and loses his presence. Let us remember, that if we entreat Christ to depart, he may listen to our request: and once forsaking us, it may be for ever!

PRAYER.

Before thee, O Lord, the Father of all, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, would we again prostrate ourselves, in holy reverence. We acknowledge our great unworthiness to appear in thy presence, but thou dost encourage us to come boldly to thy throne of grace, and for the sake of Him whom thou hearest always, to hope for mercy to pardon, and grace to help us. Give us then to draw near with pure hearts, and with the confidence of children to thy Father, to pour out our hearts before thee.

And now, Lord, we entreat of thee to give us just views of our own sinfulness. We are in thy sight, wretched, and miserable, and poor, and naked, and naked; covered with the leprosy of sin, the whole head sick, and the whole heart corrupt. But how little do we feel this our natural condition. How prone are we to lose sight of our guilt and depravity, to draw a covering over the diseases of our corrupt nature, the plagues of our deceitful and desperately wicked hearts, and thus to say, Peace, peace to our souls, all is well. Do thou, then, O merciful Father, by thy Holy Spirit, shine into our hearts, to give us just views of sin, and just views of ourselves as sinners. Discover to us our deep depravity, our personal guilt, our manifold transgressions, that we may thus be led to unfeigned humility, to genuine contrition, to fervent supplication. At this moment we would use the language, with, we trust, somewhat of the feelings of the abased publican,—God be merciful to us sinners; or the trembling disci-

ples,—Lord save us, we perish. O what ground is there for eternal thankfulness and praise, that with the Lord there is mercy, that with our God there is plenteous redemption; that there is a way of escape from sin's guilt and sin's pollution and power; there is now balm in Gilead, there is a physician there. Thou, O Lord, hast laid our help on one that is mighty to save. We triumph in Christ, who is revealed and made known to us in the gospel, and of whom such glorious things are spoken in that portion of the word of life now read. We would mark, with adoring gratitude, the compassion and tenderness of our gracious Redeemer, the dignity and power of our Almighty Saviour; and we do rejoice in the thought that that Saviour, exalted though he is on high, is the same gracious, compassionate friend; that he is willing, as he is able, to save to the very uttermost, all that come unto God through Him; that he retains a feeling of our infirmities, and that he will succour those that are tempted. Let it be given to us, Lord, in the behalf of Christ, to believe on his name. Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief. We would say in faith, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make us clean; speak the word and we shall be healed. Pardon, Lord, our iniquities, for they are very great. Cure, Lord, our every disease. Heal our backslidings; mortify our corruptions; uproot our every sinful propensity; transform us into thine own blessed image; make us, Lord, what thou wouldst have us to be, and keep us by thy mighty power, through faith, unto salvation.

We would look back on the way by which thou, Lord, hast led us this day; thou hast carried us out and brought us in in safety, and hast permitted no evil to approach us; and we would set up our Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. And now, Lord, we commit ourselves to thee this night; defend us, we beseech thee, from all danger; grant us refreshing sleep; bring us, if it is thy holy will, to the light of a new day, with increasing desires to love, to serve, and to obey thee. And to thy name, in Christ Jesus, we will ascribe all the praise. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXIII. 3—7.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1. *Vision.* Before there was a written record, God's will was communicated to mankind, chiefly, either by dreams or visions. These visions

were of two kinds, sometimes the thing was made known by an external representation when the senses were all awake and alive; at other times the senses were suspended, but the mind was kept active and elevated to the contemplation and understanding of what was revealed. Ver. 3. *Born in my house, &c.* It was not unfrequent for servants or slaves born in the house and brought up under a master's eye, and who, by their affection and fidelity, had ingratiated themselves, to become, when the master was childless, his sole heir, or to inherit a large share of his wealth. Ver. 6. *Believed in the Lord, &c.* Abram's unshaken reliance on the faithfulness and power of God, to accomplish that which appeared impossible, his having a son when both he and Sarah were far advanced in years, a son whom he was prepared to sacrifice at God's command, yet whom he was persuaded God could raise up though consumed to ashes—was such an instance of faith that he was called the Father of believers. It was through this principle of faith that he was accepted, that he was viewed and treated as righteous, and not in virtue of any or all his other heavenly graces, nor in virtue of any or all his virtuous and holy deeds. Ver. 9. *Take me an heifer, &c.* Ere the vision is granted, Abram is directed to go through certain rites. The different creatures here mentioned, and which, doubtless, were sacrificed, are the same which were afterwards prescribed in the Levitical law. When the victim was slain and equally divided, and its parts placed asunder, the contracting parties approached at the opposite ends of the passage that was formed, met in the middle, and there took the oath of confirmation. Ver. 17. *Smoking furnace, &c.* God was symbolized as passing through the parts of the victims, and thus does he condescend to ratify his covenant in the usual prescribed mode. Some expositors seem to think, that by the sign of the smoking furnace, God meant to point out Israel's misery in the iron furnace of Egypt, and that by the burning lamp is signified God's light and deliverance after the long dark night of affliction.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Blessed are they whose God is the Lord; they shall want no good thing: He will be their protection in danger, their guide in perplexity, and their stay in want; He will give them grace here and glory hereafter. It is a matter of great comfort, that we can pour all the complaints of our oppressed and burdened spirits into the ear of our compassionate, almighty, and faithful Friend. The promises of God are suited to all our circumstances and exigencies; but that we may experience their soothing influence; that they may prove an anchor and stay to the soul, we must exercise a firm, unshaken reliance upon them. Would we be the children of Abram and be counted righteous as he was, and heirs of the inheritance to which he is raised, we must have a faith like his: faith in the wisdom, the power, the mercy, and the faithfulness of God. Above all, faith in Him who is the alone righteousness and strength, the alone salvation and desire, of his people. This reliance on the promise of God through Christ, this trust in the Redeemer, is that divine principle which,

in the economy of grace, gives a title to all the privileges and blessings of the new covenant. If we would meet with God, hope for the light of his countenance, and the aids of his almighty power; we must have recourse to all the instituted ordinances of his grace. In the history and experience of God's people, great darkness often precedes great light. The departure of God's people hence, is peaceful and serene, because the Lord is with them, and they anticipate a life and blessedness that shall never end. The covenant betwixt God and his own people, has been confirmed by sacrifice, even by the blood of the Son of God. Let us, like Abram, look beyond a numerous offspring to the promised Seed, and beyond the earthly Canaan to the land of eternal rest.

PRAYER.

It is good for us, O Lord Most High, to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night; for while all thy works praise thee, it surely becomes thy rational offspring to bless thee. We thank thee, Lord, for all thy mercies to us, undeserving sinners; but especially would we bless thy name for thine unspeakable gift, Jesus Christ. In this hast thou manifested thy love towards us, in a way that passeth all understanding. And we bless thee, Lord, for the early intimations of thy purposes of grace, in regard to our rebellious, fallen, and lost race. Never hast thou left thyself without witness of thy gracious designs; We thank thee, that to the first transgressor the whispers of peace were addressed; that to the patriarchs a Deliverer was promised; and that as time advanced, and generation succeeded generation, the declarations of heaven became more full and explicit, and the views of the Deliverer and the deliverance more clear and enlivening; and we adore thee, that in the fulness of time, the promised Deliverer, has appeared to establish thy faithfulness, to magnify thy law, and to bring lost sinners to thee. And now, Lord, what reason have we to thank thee that the Day Spring from on high hath visited us; that to us Christ is made known; that to us his salvation is published; that to us all the riches of his grace and glory are freely offered. O let us never forget, that to whom much is given, of them much shall be required. Inspire us with that holy principle that distinguished the Father of the faithful; give us that faith which raises above all doubts, all suspicion, all fear; which unites the soul savingly to Christ, and gives an interest in his salvation. Give us, we beseech thee, to rely with unshaken confidence on the promise of the faithful and immutable Jehovah. Give us to lay hold of, and trust to, the provisions of that covenant which was ratified by the blood of Christ, and which is in all things well ordered

and sure. Give us to look to Christ as our righteousness and strength, as all our salvation and all our desire. Justify us, Lord, freely by thy grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. And we pray, Lord, that we may experience the sanctifying influence of this divine principle, that our faith may work by love, that it may overcome the world, and that it may be accompanied by all the fruits of righteousness to the praise of thy name. And, Lord, relying on the gracious declaration to Abraham, that in his seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed, we plead thine own faithful word of promise. Give thy Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. May men be blessed in Jesus; may all nations call him blessed! We pray for the sorrowful and the afflicted, that the consolations of God may refresh their spirits. Give the dying an interest in Christ, that to them to depart may be great gain.

And now, Lord, we would place ourselves this day under thy guidance and guardianship; we would go whithersoever thou leadest us. We would ever hear thy voice behind us, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' We would sanctify thee, the Lord, in our hearts, and we would live habitually under the constraining influence of redeeming love. Lord, direct us! Lord, uphold us! Lord, strengthen us! Be our God for ever and ever, and our guide even unto death. And now to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, would we ascribe all the glory, now and for ever. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XC. 14.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW IX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

This chapter exhibits a frightful picture of the deep malignity and indomitable hatred of the Pharisees towards our Lord. No deeds of power could conquer their prejudices; no acts of kindness could win their affections. He can say nothing, he can do nothing, that meets their approval. Because Christ said, on curing the paralytic, 'thy sins are forgiven thee,' they accused him of blasphemy. Christ, however, vindicates the expression, and lays claim to divinity; he tells them plainly, that He, the Son of man, has power to forgive sins, and that he no more blasphemes in using this expression, than in saying to the lame man, 'Arise and walk.'

After our Lord's conversion of an earthly-minded publican, Christ repaired to his house, where he was brought into immediate contact with those who, by

the law, were ceremonially unclean. This gave grievous offence to these same self-righteous scribes. They allege, that by this intercourse with noted sinners, he was at once opposing the will of God, and contracting defilement. Be it even as they alleged, that there was a departure from the letter of the ceremonial ritual, they should bear in mind that God himself declared, Hosea vi. 6. that the ceremonial rite was to give place to the deed of mercy. God preferred mercy to sacrifice. Why did he associate with these publicans and sinners? For no other purpose than that he might bring light, and conviction, and salvation near to them. They were the sick and diseased, and where should the physician be but in company with the sick? *Casteth out devils, &c.* Christ might just appeal to the character of his miracles, to disprove the alleged fellowship. While they were deeds of might, they were deeds of mercy. He came not to destroy, but to save. By every divine act of his, distress was removed, and happiness conferred; the lame were made to leap for joy, the dumb to sing the high praises of the Lord. Is it thus that satan, the enemy of God and of goodness, acts or can act? The thing speaks for itself; Christ can have no concord with Belial.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The first thing that strikes us in this chapter and in the whole of Christ's history, is his unbounded compassion and unwearied beneficence. He went about doing good. Let us go and do likewise; let the same mind be in us that was in Christ; let us do good as we have opportunity. Mark the sovereignty and omnipotence of divine grace, in the call and conversion of Matthew. What is this individual who becomes a monument of mercy? He is one whose character is contemptible, whose employment is infamous, a detested publican; yet he is brought into the intimate fellowship and honourable service of the Redeemer. 'God has mercy on whom he will have mercy.' And as the grace of God is sovereign, so it is resistless; it is like the lightning which rends asunder and shivers the loftiest oak, which levels to the dust the proudest tower. Christ speaks the word and the change is effected. There is something sublime in the account given of the conversion. Christ says, 'Follow me. And he arose and followed him.' With an attachment to the world that might appear unconquerable, in circumstances and in society that naturally steeled against any saving impression, with a heart hard as the nether millstone, the publican listens, he yields, he follows Him who has not where to lay his head. Has such a saving change been wrought in us? has the voice of Christ reached our heart? If we are really changed, effectually called, we will, we cannot but follow Christ. In every case where conversion is genuine, the world, and satan, and self, all combine in holding away from Christ; but in despite of all, in defiance of all, the liberated captive flies to Christ, lays hold of him, and will not let him go.

How graciously does Christ accommodate his requirements to the special circumstances and attainments of his children. Christ taught his disciples as they were able to bear, and he summoned to duties

corresponding to the degree of light, and knowledge, and strength, that was imparted. Let ministers and parents, and advanced Christians, act similarly; let them take the children by the hand, and lead them gently along; let them not despise the day of small things; let them not look for the maturity of Paul the aged, in the child Timothy. If there is a sin more awful than another, it is that of these Pharisees, who ascribe to a co-partnership with *satan*, what can only be effected by the finger of God. Read what Christ himself says of it, *Mat. xii. 31.*

Our Lord lets us see what the duty of Christians is, with regard to the church, and the world; it is to pray and to continue to pray. There is a plenteous harvest to be reaped, sinners are fainting, souls are perishing, Christians must pray the Lord to increase the number of the labourers, and to increase their zeal, their activity, their affection, their faithfulness.

PRAYER.

How excellent is thy name, O Lord, in all the earth; thou hast set thy glory above the heavens. Thou art clothed with honour and majesty; angels worship thee, archangels adore thee. But though thou humblest thyself to behold the things that are in heaven, thou dost not disregard the things that are on earth. To that man thou lookest, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit. Encouraged by this consideration, weak, helpless, and guilty, and polluted, though we are, we would this evening prostrate ourselves before thee. We would thank thee, Lord, for the unnumbered mercies that have been crowded into our lot. Well may we say, that our blessings have been numerous as the moments of our existence. We were cast on thee from the womb, and thou hast never ceased to care for us; our wants have returned daily and hourly, but thy hand has been opened for their supply; dangers have threatened and overtaken us, but thine arm has been stretched out for our defence. Surely on looking back on the way by which we have been conducted through the wilderness, and marking God's dealings towards us, we may well say, 'goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life.' And yet, what are we that the Lord should deal thus bountifully with us; for although we have been nourished and brought up as children, we have rebelled against thee. And during this very day that has fled away, how often have we forgotten, how often have we forsaken thee, how much have we been cumbered with the many things to the neglect of the one thing needful, how little have our thoughts, and words, and actions, been under the direction and control of religious principle, and how little have we in our duties and trials been influenced by a sense

of the divine goodness. Lord, thou mightest righteously have cut us down as the cumberers of the ground: but thou art God and not man, therefore thou hast borne with us, and waitest to be gracious to us. See God our shield, look on us in the face of thine own Anointed. Receive us graciously, love us freely, for Christ's sake. And now we adore thee, that thou hast permitted us once more to read thy most holy word, to learn of Christ and his salvation, and to meditate on things that are spiritual and divine. Bring the doctrines and lessons of thy word home with saving power; let them dwell in us richly, in all knowledge and understanding. Do thou, Lord, who hast the hearts of all in thy hands, speak with resistless energy to each of our hearts. If there are among us benighted souls, may thy Holy Spirit enlighten us; if there are dead among us, may we be quickened and revived; if we labour under spiritual apathy, do thou, O Lord, arouse us; strengthen the spark within us that may be ready to die; speak to us, Lord, according to our different cases, and make us what thou wouldest have us to be. Fill us with deeper concern for the glory of the Redeemer; inspire us with more sincere, and ardent, and active love for perishing souls. Lord, the harvest is great; soon may the wilderness be glad, the desert rejoice, and blossom like the rose!

We commit ourselves, Lord, to thy divine protection this night; may the eternal God be our refuge; may the everlasting arms encircle us. Bring us, if it is thy holy will, to the light of a new day; and whether we sleep or wake, may we be still with thee. Our prayers now, Lord, are before thee, we beseech thee to hear, to accept, and to answer us, for the Redeemer's sake Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 42.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XVII.

REMARKS.

Abram in his impatience to obtain the promised seed, had formed an improper connection with Hagar, and the child that was born of her had for some years been fondly regarded as the son of promise. When the Lord, therefore, began to renew the intercourse with Abram, and to make a full disclosure of his purpose concerning the promised seed, he began with declaring himself to be the Almighty God, before whom Abram was to walk and be perfect (*ver. 1.*); implying that as he was well able

accomplish every word of promise, though to the eye of sense it might be attended with seeming impossibilities, it was the part of his servant to resort to no crooked line of policy, but to pursue the onward path of integrity, resting with assured confidence in the word, 'whereon God had caused him to hope.' And to render the things promised concerning the largeness of his offspring, and their inheritance of the land of Canaan, more sure to the faith of Abram, the Lord proceeded to make them matter of covenant-engagement, appointing the rite of circumcision to stand as the sign and memorial of that between them. Nor did he stop there in his condescension and goodness to his servant, but having converted what had hitherto existed merely as matter of promise into the terms of a stipulated engagement, he proceeded to disclose the still undeclared, and now even unsuspected fact, that Sarah was to be the mother of the son through whom the promised seed was to come.

A momentary feeling of delightful surprise and wonder seems to have passed through the mind of Abraham when he heard this unexpected intelligence; but it soon passed away, like a vision of the night, leaving the mind more distressed and desolate than before. The thought instantly occurred to him, that the promise of a child by Sarah was fatal to the interests of Ishmael, and that his long-cherished hopes concerning this beloved child were to be for ever quenched in disappointment. He therefore pled with the earnestness of parental affection, that 'Ishmael might still live before God;' but it was the pleading of nature against the purposes of grace. Ishmael was not the child of promise, nor were the things revealed as objects of faith at all spoken concerning him; he was the son of the bondmaid, the mere offspring of the flesh, not the fruit of that everlasting covenant, the blessings of which are all the gifts of grace on the part of God, and received, on the part of his people, by the exercise of a living faith. He must, therefore, be removed, that the purpose of grace might stand, though the heart-strings of a father's love were to be rent asunder by the stroke.

Abraham's prayer, however, was not altogether rejected; for the Lord promised to make Ishmael also the head of a numerous and powerful offspring. And Abraham, in testimony of his cordial acquiescence in the covenant, and full confidence in its promised blessings, proceeded to administer to himself and to his household the rite of circumcision—giving a prompt and faithful obedience to all that was commanded, ver. 23—27. In this he stands forth to us as a pattern of the sincere and ready obedience, which must ever be yielded by the covenant-people of God to all his righteous commands; and as we learn here the necessity of such an obedience, so in the previous transactions we learn, that if we would inherit the blessings of the everlasting covenant, we must lay our account by having the feelings and affections of nature mortified by the operation of grace, and must renounce all confidence in the flesh, that the power of God may be magnified in us.

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever blessed God! thou art worthy to receive our humblest adoration; yea, thou art exalted above all blessing and praise; and there is none in heaven or on earth that can once be compared to thee. The nations before thee are as nothing, and are counted less than nothing, and vanity. Help us, therefore, to fall down before thee with reverence and godly fear; and while we venture into thy presence, let every proud thought be abased, that God alone may be exalted in our hearts.

We give thanks unto thy name, O Lord, that though we see thee not with our bodily eye, we are yet permitted to behold thee with the eye of faith—revealed in a character fitted to draw forth the liveliest feelings and affections of our heart. It is thy mercy which hath thus made us to differ from the blinded and idolatrous nations who worship they know not what, being carried captive by Satan at his will. And since thou hast revealed thyself, not only as possessed of that essential glory and excellence, which is inseparably thine own, but as condescending to hold with us, thine unworthy creatures, a covenant-relation through thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, O grant that we may be enabled to apprehend thee aright in this endearing character, and to close heartily with the terms which thou art therein holding out to our acceptance.

May we ever bear in mind, that it is in Christ alone we can possess the privileges of thy children; that it is only by faith in Him, that we have access into the grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Let Christ appear increasingly precious to our souls; and seeing that in Him, as our surety, we have one infinitely able to satisfy every demand which law and justice could bring against us, may we ever have grace to hold fast this confidence of our rejoicing, and count all things but as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

We pray also, heavenly Father, that as thy covenant-people, thou wouldest enable us to walk worthy of thee unto all pleasing. Having been brought from the depths of misery and corruption, to stand so near to thyself, and inherit the blessings of thine everlasting covenant, O grant that we may be enabled to purify ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, to keep our garments undefiled, and walk with thee our God in the white robes of righteousness. Fill us with the grace of thy blessed Spirit, that we may be able to crucify sin in all our members—that we may rise superior to the desires and affec-

tions of nature—that at thy bidding we may be ready to part with every object, however much endeared to our affections, yea, and may not count our very lives dear to us, that we may finish with joy the course which thou hast set before us. May we all be of one mind with our blessed Redeemer, whose meat it was to do the will of His Father in heaven; and may we feel it to be our happiness, as well as our duty, to walk in the careful observance of every precept thou hast enjoined upon us.

Let thy blessing, we humbly beseech thee, be upon us this day, to which, in thy mercy and loving-kindness, we have been spared. Give us our daily bread, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Where we go, do thou, Lord, go with us; cause the light of thy countenance to shine upon us, and let the right hand of thy righteousness establish our goings.

We commend unto thee our friends and relatives, praying that they may all be enriched with thy grace, and satisfied with thy abundant goodness. Let the land in which we live be eminently blessed of thee; let those who rule, rule in the fear of God, and let the hearts of the people be turned away from all manner of iniquity to the knowledge and service of thee, the living God. Yea, let all lands, we pray thee, soon come to know thy truth, and rejoice in thy salvation. Cause thy word to have free course and be glorified throughout the earth—even till thy knowledge cover it as the waters cover the channel of the sea. And now, heavenly Father, let our prayer this morning come up before thee with acceptance, blot out all our sins, and accept of us in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIII. 10.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW x. 1—23.

REMARKS.

The selection of the twelve apostles at this period, and sending them forth to proclaim the approaching institution of Messiah's kingdom, was both a wise and a merciful arrangement. It gave these apostles some trial of the peculiar work in which they were to be engaged, before their divine Master had left them: and it served to acquaint the whole land of Judea with the progress of the mighty work that was going on in the midst of them; while the miraculous power, with which they were invested, evidently bespoke them to be the true and accredited

messengers of one who was entitled to the humblest reverence and regard.

The instructions which Christ gave to his apostles for their guidance on this their first embassy to the people, were partly of a special nature, and not intended to be observed, even by the apostles at any subsequent period of their ministry. Thus, they were commanded to provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass, nor anything, in short, but what formed a part of their ordinary attire: that going forth unfurnished with any manner of provisions, and carrying nothing with them, either for defence or support, they might have a more sensible experience of the watchful care and providence of their divine Master, and might be the more disposed to trust him for whatsoever was needful, after he had visibly withdrawn his presence from them. But this was the main design which these instructions were intended to serve, and having served that, they were no longer to be considered binding; and indeed, were expressly recalled by Christ, shortly before his crucifixion, (Luke xxii. 35—38,) and the apostles were commanded thenceforth to provide themselves with every thing they possibly could for their defence and support. It is the latter, therefore, and not the former temporary directions, which the Christian missionary or spiritual labourer is to regard as properly applicable to him; and though he should not doubt the ever-watchful care and faithful oversight of the great Shepherd of the sheep, he must remember, that this does not by any means supersede the exercise of his own prudence and foresight.

In the other instructions given by our Lord on this occasion, his apostles were enjoined to confine their labours strictly to the Jews, as the design of God required that these should be first offered the blessings of Messiah's kingdom; and by the time they had gone through the land of Judea, the thing which concerned the actual establishment of the kingdom should be at hand, (ver. 23.) This was therefore, but a temporary restriction of their labours; and we know that their commission was afterwards enlarged, so as to reach even to the uttermost parts of the earth. But while sent forth to labour among their own countrymen and to make known the approach of Messiah's kingdom, they were forewarned of much danger and opposition in their course; the miraculous power which they possessed, and the blessed errand on which they were sent, could not save them from malice and persecution at the hands even of those who were of one stock and kindred with themselves; as they amply experienced, though not to any extent now, yet presently after Christ rose from the dead. They were therefore to go forth as in the midst of enemies, with all prudence and circumspection; giving no unnecessary ground of offence, and using every precaution for their safety; but resting assured all the while, that Christ was with them, and would account whatsoever was done against them as done against himself, and would pour words of wisdom and power into their mouths, with which all their adversaries should not be able to gainst; resist.

Neither the Christian minister nor the private believer must expect to pass through the world without

out experiencing its envy and malice, perhaps even its bitterest hatred, if they are indeed faithful to the cause of Christ and zealous in his service. They are not of the world, and therefore the world hateth them. But this should never daunt or discourage them, seeing it is only what they have been taught from the first to expect, and knowing, as they do, that they are cheered with the presence and support of Christ—that if they boldly confess him now, they shall be openly confessed by him hereafter; and if they only endure to the end, they shall unquestionably be saved.

PRAYER.

We bow down before thee, O Lord, adoring thee as the Father of mercies and the God of all grace. Thy thoughts towards us have ever been thoughts of peace, and all thy ways have been faithfulness and truth. The experience of every day brings to us renewed manifestations of thy fatherly goodness, and every new opening of thy counsel unfolds to us fresh discoveries of the everlasting love wherewith thou hast loved us in Christ.

We would unite, O God, in giving thee thanks, eternal thanks, that thou hast sent thy Son into this world to seek and to save the lost. We rejoice that in his blood thou hast provided a ransom sufficient to atone for all guilt, and hast brought in an everlasting righteousness, which for ever perfects them that are sanctified. Herein indeed was love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave up his only begotten Son to the death, even the painful and accursed death of the cross, for us. And blessed be thy name, O God, that thou hast not left us in ignorance of thy manifested grace, but hast brought near to each of us the message of this salvation, testifying of thy willingness to receive us to an interest in its blessings, and seal us up to an inheritance in thy kingdom.

O let the glad tidings be received with welcome into our hearts, and have their gracious design fulfilled in our experience, by turning us away from all our iniquities to serve the living God. May we ever hail it as a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners, even the chief; and seeing that for our sakes thou hast caused him, though he knew no sin, to become sin for us, grant that we may indeed be found the righteousness of God in him.

But, O Lord, we pray, not only that we may be thus led to receive and abide in Jesus, but that we may also be enabled to approve ourselves his faithful followers, and be ready to bear his reproach. Thou hast cast our lot in a world where thy truth is little known, and much dis-

liked; where many sinful prejudices and worldly interests are ever rising up to withstand the claims of Christ: so that the cause of holiness is often oppressed, and the good of thy people evil spoken of. Give us grace, therefore, O Lord, to stand fast against the dangers to which we are exposed, and permit us not to be moved from the hope of that gospel, which thou hast delivered to us. Let the power of our risen Lord flow down into our hearts, and strengthen us with all might, by thy Spirit, in the inner man, that we may overcome, even as he also has overcome; that we may never fall from our steadfastness, but follow him through good report and through bad report, and that in all things he may be glorified by us.

Look, we beseech thee, O Lord, upon thy suffering cause in the earth, and revive it in the midst of the days. Send forth refreshments from thy presence, and ordain strength out of the mouths even of those who are as babes in thy heavenly kingdom, so that they may still the enemy and the avenger. Purify thy church more and more from the corruptions which have defaced her comeliness, and impaired her strength. Clothe thy priests with salvation, and cause thy saints to shout for joy. Let thy work increase and prosper, and let multitudes be added to thy church of such as shall be saved. We commit ourselves to thee for protection and blessing this night. Let the banner of thy love be over us, and let no plague come nigh our dwelling. When we lie down, be thou with us. When we awake, may we find ourselves still with God. And O grant, that whether we wake or sleep, we may all live together with Christ. Hear, Lord, our prayer: pardon our transgressions; accept our thanksgivings for thy manifold mercies through another day; and do to us even more than we can ask or think, through Christ Jesus the Beloved. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CIII. 20.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XVIII.

REMARKS.

The events of this chapter form a delightful commentary on the expression, 'Abraham was called the friend of God.' Throughout the whole history of this patriarch, God never appears to admit his servant into such near and familiar terms with him as here. And Abraham was now precisely in the condition, when if ever, we might have expected him to receive the largest manifestation of divine

favour. His faith was now complete, able to take in the entire compass of the divine promises, as well as to rest with undoubting confidence on the fulfilment of what was promised. Nor had he only reached this state of completeness as a man of faith, but had also been raised to the high and elevated standing of a covenant-relation to God; so that in regard to the rank and privileges of a spiritual condition he had become a perfect man and had nothing farther to obtain. And now, therefore, God not only revealed himself to his servant as formerly, but comes near to him as a friend—talks with him face to face—gives him to walk in company with angels—admits him to a share in the divine counsels—treats him, in a word, to the noble freedom and distinguishing privileges of a son. In all this Abraham stands as an exact type of the believer, who through faith has laid hold of the everlasting covenant and has come to the full enjoyment of its privileges; and for the purpose of foreshadowing this more distinctly, the things here recorded of Abraham were no doubt specially designed and ordered. When faith is fully formed in the soul, and has attained to settled and comprehensive views of all the mercy and the grace which are disclosed in the divine covenant of love, there is no longer any reserve in the communications that are held between it and God; it sees as with open face the glory of the Lord, and exercises realizing confidence in his blessed word; the secret of the Lord is with it; it enjoys the companionship and ministry of angels, and has power even with God as a prince to prevail.

In Abraham's entertainment of these divine strangers we learn the duty of being hospitable and kind to all, even to those who may be personally unknown to us; and in Sarah's fruitless attempt to deny her unbelieving laughter, we are admonished of the folly of seeking to conceal sin from an all-seeing God. We see, however, that Abraham did not merely entertain those heavenly guests, but also went with them by the way, scarcely knowing how to part with such blessed company. And he reaped the benefit of his heavenly temper by being treated to double honour—by obtaining an insight into the secret counsel of God concerning Sodom and Gomorrah. But he felt the honour to be one which brought with it a solemn responsibility, and seeing that he alone of all men living enjoyed the confidence of God in this behalf, and was admitted to the place of a friend, he regarded himself as called upon to think with concern upon the doomed condition of so many of his fellow-creatures, and to use the friendship he was privileged to hold with God in striving, if possible, to avert the impending ruin. With the deepest reverence and humility, yet with the greatest freedom and earnestness, he entreated that, for the sake of the righteous, God would be pleased to spare the guilty; and God ever granted his request, promising even for the sake of ten, if only ten righteous persons could be found, to spare the whole mass of profligate and wicked men that were crowded into those cities of the plain; but at the same time intimating, that even that limited number could not be found, and that therefore the judgment of God must proceed. How great is the

honour which God puts upon his saints, that he will thus allow them to plead with him concerning his judgments! How precious in his sight must be their lives, that for a mere handful of such he will have mercy on an immense multitude of sinners! And O how hateful before him, and how hard to themselves, are the ways of transgressors, which ever cry to heaven for vengeance, and which cannot escape from receiving, sooner or later, at the hands even of a God who delighteth in mercy, the overwhelming visitations of his wrath!

PRAYER.

O Lord God, how great is thy goodness! how adorable is thy condescension toward sinners! Thou art so highly exalted above all creation, that thou humblest thyself even to behold the things that are in heaven and on earth. Yet thou dost not only behold us, but dost graciously think upon us, and rejoice over us to do us good; and we are all before thee as living monuments of thy mercy, and constant pensioners upon thy bounty, receiving daily at thy hand innumerable mercies, of the very least of which we are altogether unworthy.

O Lord, thou mightest have dealt otherwise with us—thou mightest have given us judgment instead of mercy, and sent hard things into our experience. For how often have we provoked thee, the Lord, to anger by our iniquities! and behaved ourselves with a proud and stubborn heart toward thine infinite majesty! We have indeed added sin to sin—day after day transgressing thy righteous precepts—disregarding thy severe threatenings, and trampling upon that holy covenant which thou hast ratified with the blood of thy dear Son.

We would, therefore, in drawing near to thee, make mention of thy loving-kindness and of thy righteousness, even of thine only. Blessed be thy name, that thou hast revealed thyself in a character of free and sovereign grace; that thou hast taken for thy memorial through all generations, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness, and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin. And when we think what thou hast done for us in the exercise of this thy wonderful compassion; how thou hast not spared the Son of thy love, but given Him up to the death for us, that we might be redeemed from wrath and obtain the adoption of sons, it well becomes us to exclaim in devout astonishment, Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God! O let each one of us be humbled to the dust under a sense of thine infinite goodness and undeserved mercy. Give us to feel the obligations under which we lie; because of the riches of redeem-

ing grace, to honour and glorify thy name; and as owing every thing we have and hope for to thine unmerited goodness, may we be constrained to yield ourselves as living sacrifices to thee, which is our reasonable service.

Forbid, O God, we earnestly implore thee, that any of us should reject the offers of a mercy so undeserved, and lose our inheritance in a salvation so unspeakably great. Draw us near to thee with the cords of thy love, and bind us up to a saving interest in thine everlasting covenant. O let our portion be the portion of thy children. And enable us by thy grace ever to bear in mind the high and holy calling wherewith we are called, as thy redeemed and covenant people in Christ, that we may walk worthy of it. May our conversation indeed be in heaven; may we walk as becomes those, who have their fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

We thankfully acknowledge thy goodness in sparing us to see the light of this day, and would commit ourselves in confidence to thee as thy children, that we may be kept from all evil, and fitted for the discharge of our respective duties. Let integrity and uprightness preserve us. And while we are called to mingle in the society and go into the employment of this present evil world, O suffer us not to forget that thou hast called us out of the world to be thy chosen people, to do thy blessed will and be faithful witnesses of thy truth. Hold thou up our goings, so that our footsteps may not slide from the path of thy commandments. Let thy blessing, we humbly pray thee, be upon our kindred, upon our rulers, upon the land of our nativity, and upon all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in every region of the earth. Refresh thy weary heritage with much of thine own Spirit, and cause the sound of thy gospel to be heard in every land, and to reach even to the ends of the earth. Let the people praise thee, O Lord, let all the people praise thee. Our waiting eyes are toward thee. Hear in heaven thy dwelling-place, and when thou hearest forgive, for all we ask is in the name of Jesus Christ, our ever blessed Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 18.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW X. 24—42.

REMARKS.

In this second part of our Lord's exhortations, he rises to considerations of a more general nature than those contained in the earlier part, and directs the

minds of his apostles to such thoughts as were most fitted to confirm and animate them in the prosecution of their course. Reminding them of the false accusation which had been brought against him, as having cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, he gives them plainly to understand, that they who were but his servants or followers, had no reason to look for any better treatment, if they were not even more harshly dealt with; but proceeds immediately to impress upon them a variety of truths, which, if rightly apprehended and felt, must have been sufficient to fortify their hearts against all opposition, and prepare them for the hardest encounters. He speaks to them of the tender care and concern of their heavenly Father, by whom the very hairs of their head were numbered, and of the close and inseparable connexion that subsisted between them and himself, which was such, that whosoever received them virtually received him, and whosoever, for his sake, gave to them so much as a cup of cold water, should be sure of a plentiful reward. But he speaks to them also, of things fitted to arouse their fears, as well as to fill them with encouragement—tells them that though they might have to suffer the worst from their fellow-men, by adherence to his cause, they had much more to dread, if, by forsaking it, they fell under the displeasure of God, who has power not merely to kill the body, but to cast both soul and body into hell-fire—that necessity was laid upon them, whatever evils they might incur in this life, boldly to confess their attachment to him, otherwise he would not confess, but deny them, before his Father in heaven—and that from the very nature of the kingdom he was going to establish, which would divide families, and part asunder the nearest friends, they must be ready to die to the tenderest feelings of nature, and not count any thing on earth dear to them, unless they would make entire shipwreck of their faith and interest in him.

The dangers to which the apostles were exposed, were certainly more formidable, and the trials, through which they had to win their crown, more painfully severe, than such as commonly fall to the lot of Christians. But it is well to remember, that the smallest stumbling-block in our course may prove our overthrow as well as the largest, and that there are temptations in the lot of all sufficient, and much more than sufficient, to corrupt them from the simplicity that is in Christ. If we are upheld in our steadfastness and enabled to persevere to the end, it can only be from our having become alive to the same views and considerations, which were present to the minds of the apostles in their difficult and dangerous career. Let us, therefore, lay seriously to heart, the equally solemn and animating reflections, which are pressed upon our notice in this concluding part of our Saviour's address. We have nothing comparatively to fear, if we are but faithful to his cause, and allow nothing to come between us and a devoted obedience to his precepts. The eye of a covenant God is then upon us continually for good; the everlasting arms are underneath us; blessed are those that bless us, cursed are those that curse us. But, if either the trials or the pleasures of life move us to

forsake Christ, or to turn back like a deceitful bow from the more difficult duties of his service, O how dreadful is the condemnation that awaits us! We have betrayed the cause of him whom we profess to honour as our Redeemer, and have done what will assuredly kindle against us the wrath of God and of the Lamb.

PRAYER.

Our Father, who art in heaven! we come to thee as a portion of thy family on earth, to adore and praise thee as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We come to thee in his name, in whom thou art ever well pleased, and desire to know nothing as the ground of our confidence at thy throne, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. See us, we humbly pray thee, in the face of thine anointed; draw near and visit us with thy salvation; give us to experience the good of thy chosen, and fill our souls abundantly with the riches of redeeming grace.

We esteem it good for us, O God, to be waiting as humble suppliants at thy footstool. For thou hast all power, and glory, and blessing, at thy disposal: and in thee alone can we find what we need to restore and satisfy our natures. Thou art the fountain of living waters, and apart from thee there is no life and refreshment to the soul. O let us know somewhat of the infinite sufficiency that is in thee. Manifest thyself to us in another manner than thou dost unto the world. With the blessed light of thy countenance do thou shine upon our souls, and out of the fulness which thou hast treasured up in Christ for thy believing people, give us all to receive, even grace for grace.

Thou hast declared, that all who are far away from thee shall perish, and that tribulation and wrath shall be revealed against those who have despised the gospel of thy grace in Christ. Save us, we therefore pray thee, save us from falling into that perdition of ungodly men. Quicken us by thy Holy Spirit, that we may ever be kept truly alive to the things which belong to our everlasting peace. And if thou art pleased to bring danger or difficulty into our path—if reproach, or persecution, or distress, is appointed to us in the course of thy providence, for the sake of Christ, enable us to take all meekly as from thy hand, and as knowing that we have with thee an inheritance that faileth not. Let eternal realities be so deeply impressed upon our minds by the power of the Spirit, that we shall be disposed to count even the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of a perishing world; that neither the fear of men's displeasure, nor the love of men's applause, may have power to bring us under bondage to sin,

but that we may hold fast to the end our spiritual freedom, and permit no one to take our crown. While it is given us now to live amid the light and privileges of the gospel, O enable us to live to the Lord, that when we die, we may also die unto the Lord; living or dying, may we alike be thine.

We bless thy name, that another day, another week, has passed over our heads, bringing to us, as individuals and as a family, many tokens of thy care and tenderness. We are not worthy, O Lord, of the least of thy mercies; and with every remembrance of thy goodness, we desire to couple a deep sense of our exceeding sinfulness. Visit us not, we beseech thee, according to our iniquities—requite us not after our folly: but bury our transgressions in the depths of the sea, and in thy great mercy come over all the mountains of our provocations. Watch over us in covenant-faithfulness during the silence and the darkness of this night. Let the blood of sprinkling be upon the door-posts of our dwelling, that the destroying angel may not come nigh us. Give us all to experience the rest of thy beloved, and refresh us both in body and in soul, for the solemnities of another day of the Son of man. May the outgoings of a returning Sabbath be felt to rejoice over us, with manifestations of love and favour to us from on high. And O may the Sun of righteousness arise on the morrow, with healing under his wings, upon many dark and benighted souls. Hear, Lord, when we call unto thee, and let grace, mercy and peace, now and evermore, rest upon us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THIRD WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM X.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM X.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

It is a well-known characteristic of believers every age, that they not only mourn over, but endeavour to arrest the prevalence of sin, as injurious to their own spiritual comfort, offensive in the sight of a holy God, and destructive of the highest interests of those who practise it. In the first eleven verses of this Psalm, a description is found of pitch to which ungodly men were carrying their wickedness, at the time when David penned it, of the cruelty with which they oppressed the humble and needy around them. The description is given in terms the most melancholy and alarming. The wicked man, says the Psalmist, inflated by p

took pleasure in persecuting the poor, either because they protested against his ungodly ways, or in order to satiate his ambition. Instead of concealing his depravity, he boasted of gratifying his lawless passions and encouraged the participators in his guilt. Haughtiness sat enthroned on every feature of his countenance, and proclaimed that to no superior, on earth or in heaven, would he bow; that according to his own wisdom his opinions would be formed, and according to the bent of his own wishes his conduct would be regulated. His actions were despotic towards all within his reach; the threatenings of the Almighty he totally disregarded. Elated by temporary prosperity, he fancied that he could never be moved; that no adverse events could rob him of his enjoyments. Out of his mouth flowed blasphemy against God, and deceit, mischief, and vanity were ever ready to further his iniquitous purposes. In hiding places, in the neighbourhood of the villages, he concealed himself for the purpose of murdering the innocent, and plundering them of their substance. He occasionally humbled himself, assuming the attitude of their equal, or even of their inferior, that the unsuspecting might more easily be led astray by his diabolical stratagems. In the full height of impiety, he disclaimed the divine omniscience, affirming that his shame-faced character was unknown in heaven; that his deeds of violence, and oppression, and licentiousness would never be visited by retributive judgment. Such is a description of the wicked, when David penned the psalm which we have read; a description which bears surely a dreadful testimony to the depravity of the human mind, and the need there is of restraining grace to keep it within even tolerable bounds. It is not, however, to be understood that by any one individual all these crimes were perpetrated, but that they abounded throughout the land, and, because the perpetrators were not visited with immediate punishment, their numbers and hardihood were rapidly on the increase.

At the 12th verse, the psalmist, conscious of the sovereignty and mercy of God, and that He alone is able to care for his people, presents an earnest prayer that such ungodly men might be humbled, and the poor, whether in spirit or in outward estate, delivered from their unexampled tyranny, and ascribes praise to God, as our everlasting king, who will hear and answer the desire of the humble.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

From the procedure of David in this psalm, a very obvious admonition is spoken to us. As well as the other righteous men in the land, he doubtless employed every method, argument, and remonstrance, and affectionate entreaty with his countrymen, to convince them of their profligacy, and lead them to repentance, but, persuaded that all human means, without the blessing of heaven, are powerless, he betakes himself to prayer, beseeching that the Almighty would arise and vindicate his own cause; interpose in behalf of his poor and afflicted ones, and arrest the licentiousness and cruelty of the oppressor. Never should this example be absent from our minds. We may and ought to exert ourselves for

the suppression of infidelity around us, the spread of gospel truth, the spiritual edification of one another, and the overthrow of every thing opposed to the will of God; at the same time, while as individuals, and as members of institutions scripturally founded, and designing God's glory, we do thus exert ourselves, like the psalmist, we ought to implore the Divine blessing upon our endeavours, and perseveringly seek that the Lord would give them efficacy. The reason why iniquity prevails so much at home, and why the cross has made so little way against idolatry in heathen lands is, because prayer, earnest and persevering, has been so generally neglected; because we have trusted too much to the excellence of human plans, and to the zeal of their abettors, and recognised too slightly the doctrine, that Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but that God alone can give the increase. Let this fact then be henceforth more deeply than ever engraven upon our recollection; and while we esteem it a privilege to be fellow-workers with God, and to do all that in us lies to promote his cause, let us pray that, by the outpouring of the Spirit, we may be strengthened for every good word and work, and have the satisfaction of witnessing Christ's enemies submitting to the truth, and becoming heirs of glory, joint heirs with Christ.

PRAYER.

Most blessed and gracious Father, the Creator, the Redeemer, and Ruler of all things, vouchsafe to us thy Spirit, that we may now draw near to thee in faith, and present our supplications in a right spirit, relying for acceptance on the finished work of thy Son. Verily thou art the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Notwithstanding the depravity of our hearts, the perversity of our wills, and the aggravated violations of thy law with which we are chargeable, thou art still sparing us in the land of the living, and in a place of hope. In the multitude of thy tender mercies we are preserved to see another sabbath morning, and in health and strength to surround the altar of family prayer. O help us to remember the spiritual things with which a sabbath morning is so much calculated to impress us. We desire to remember, that on this morning our Redeemer arose from the dead, as the spoiler of principalities and powers, as a pledge that he was the Messiah promised to thy people, and that, when we are trusting in him for salvation, we are indeed trusting in one in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. We desire that all of us may be in the Spirit on this thy holy day, and that we may be enabled to spend it as a foretaste of that everlasting sabbath promised to thy people, when time shall be no more; may we serve thee with our whole hearts, and feel ourselves refreshed and built up in our most holy

faith. We mourn over the multitudes, O Lord, who desecrate thy sabbaths, and prostitute them to the obedience of their own passions, who abstain from meeting with thee in thy sanctuary, and stout-heartedly oppose themselves to thy revealed word. This, O God, we do mourn, as hateful in thy sight, destructive to their own souls, and a grief to thine own people. Graciously stop them in their career of wickedness, pluck them as brands from the burning, and make them yet monuments to the praise of thy sovereign grace. Revive, we beseech thee, thy work in the midst of the years. Visit thine own heritage, and water and sanctify it by thy Holy Spirit. May multitudes be daily added to the church, of such as shall be saved, that righteousness may run down our streets as a stream, and iniquity, as ashamed, hide its head. Prepare our hearts for waiting acceptably upon thee in thy house. May thy servant come forth to us, fraught with the glad tidings of salvation. May sinners be converted, and mourners in Zion comforted. May all thy worshipping people be refreshed from thine own presence. If we are spared, O Lord, to see the evening, may we have great cause to say, Truly the Lord is faithful, he hath visited our souls, and given us more enlarged and experimental views of the preciousness of Christ. This, our imperfect prayer, is now before thee; be pleased to hear, and accept, and graciously answer, because all that we ask is for the sake and through the mediation of thy Son, whom thou hearest always. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIII.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS XI. XII. XIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

PSALM XI. was evidently written by David while suffering under the exasperated persecutions of Saul, whose successor to the crown of Israel he was divinely appointed to be. If ever a nation was shattered by despotic administration, and the exercise of cruelty towards its righteous subjects, we have only to look into the first book of Samuel, to see that it was that of the Hebrews, during the reign of Saul. Twice did the wretched monarch attempt to slay David, by a javelin from his own hand; craftiness, and deceit, and hollow-hearted friendship were virulently employed to take away his life. But, notwithstanding the perilous situation in which he was placed, persuaded that the Lord was able to preserve and deliver him out of his troubles, the psalmist repudiates the counsel addressed to him, to flee for safety, and leave his countrymen to the uncontrolled dominion of a wicked man. The language quoted

in the conclusion of ver. 1. *Flee as a bird to your mountain*, may be understood as spoken either by the friends of David, alarmed for his safety, or tauntingly, by his enemies, disposed to ridicule and triumph over him. If understood as spoken by his friends, along with the two following verses, it may be thus paraphrased. Ye see how maliciously the king is bent upon taking away your life, and tyrannizing over the godly; it will be of no use longer to oppose his measures, or attempt to save the kingdom from destruction; consult your own safety, by betaking yourself to a place of retreat. If understood as spoken by the enemies of David, the import is this; You boast of having a rock of defence in the Almighty, a supernatural shield protecting you from the arrows of enemies; it is high time to take your position behind that shield; hasten away, and let its impotency be demonstrated! In this sense, verses 2. and 3. contain an answer to this infidel statement, and was designed to animate and strengthen his timid friends. Lo! the wicked are aiming their bitter invectives (Psalm lxxiv. 3.) against the upright in heart, and are scorning the idea of hope in the Lord; if, therefore, we shall shrink from the avowal of that hope, or pusillanimously concede a want of confidence in God, which lies at the foundation of our faith, what can we do; are we not left, of all men, the most miserable? From ver. 4. to the end, the psalmist breaks forth in a strain of confidence in the divine sovereignty and providence, affirming, that however now despised by them, the Lord is marking the wickedness of the ungodly, and will, sooner or later, bring them to judgment.

PSALM XII. Again, during a period of general apostasy and persecution by Saul, according to his usual practice David expresses his reliance upon God that in seasons of greatest adversity he will watch over the interests of his people.

In PSALM XIII. David appears in deep mental distress. In ver. 1. he mourns the absence of God's reconciled countenance; in ver. 2. that he was in so much perplexity of soul, and so deeply wounded in his feelings by the haughtiness of his enemies; in ver. 3, 4. he beseeches God to enlighten his mind and bring him into a state of comfort, lest the wicked should take courage in their wickedness, think that they had totally confounded him, and thereby dishonour the cause of truth; in ver. 5, 6. he declares that so sure, from past experience, is he of the mercy and loving-kindness of God, that no threatenings, blasphemy, or pride around him shall ever stagger his faith, that he will yet be visited with peace, and be most glad in the Lord.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How unspeakable are the privileges of believer! When the wicked are suffering disappointment, bereavements, or worldly persecution, they have reconciled Father in whom to trust, no friend that sticketh closer than a brother, to whom they may tell their sorrows, and from whom they may receive consolation and encouragement. Far otherwise it was with the psalmist; far otherwise it is with every faithful child of God. Does protracted sickness overtake us? We receive it not as an a

thy infection, but as designed to nourish in us patience, and experience, and hope. Do the wicked breathe slander on our reputation, and try to wound our feelings? We know that they are blessed who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Does death invade our family, and carry one away who was dear to us? We believe that all things are wisely ordained by our heavenly Father, and, comforted by the promises in his word, are enabled to say, 'Yea, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' Are we in spiritual distress, because deprived of the tokens of divine favour? We can search our hearts, and therefore the Lord is angry with us, go back in tribulation to his footstool, and find him willing and anxious to bless us. Whatever be their circumstances, however hard their trials, however pungent their sorrows, however terrified their souls, blessed be God, believers know where to find the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

PRAYER.

Into thy presence, O Lord, we desire this evening to come with holy reverence for thy character, with hearts grateful for the mercies which we have this day experienced, and with earnest anxiety for grace to keep us in every time of need. Thou art well acquainted with our different cases, with our natural unbelief and hostility to thy will, with the sin that is mingled up with our purest services, and with the great need that we have of thy Spirit to work in us that godly sorrow which is not to be repented of. O grant that our souls may be enriched with thy blessing; that our progress in holiness, our love for thy word, and our experience of thy grace, may become daily more enlarged; that we may struggle against every thing in our hearts which exalteth itself against thee, and be ever ready to resign ourselves to thy holy disposal. Accept of our thanks for the loving-kindness felt by our souls this day, in thy sanctuary. May the truths which we heard be made effectual for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; strengthen our memories to remember them, and soften our hearts, that we may feel their power. Let the good hand of the Lord be around us all during the silent watches of the night; forbid that any of us should give sleep to our eyes or slumber on our eyelids, till we have called upon thee in prayer, and consigned into thy hands our interests for time and eternity; hear and graciously answer our several supplications. Bless, O Lord, those who are in distress; the sick and the dying especially commend to thy care. Call them into eternity till thou hast made them meet for the inheritance which is on high. May our friends and relations be ever the objects of thy special regard, and when we and they have been gathered to our fathers, may we meet in

thy own presence, where there are fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. Be pleased to listen to this, the voice of our supplication; and unto God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be glory and honour, dominion and praise, world without end. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIV

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XIX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The two angels, mentioned in ver. 1. are most probably two of those who, in the preceding chapter, announced the doom of Sodom to the patriarch Abraham, and who were farther commissioned to interpose for the preservation of Lot. By the treatment which the angels received, during their stay in the ill-fated city, a signal proof is given of the length to which its inhabitants dared to go in perpetrating the vilest abominations, and hence, of the equity, on the part of God, in visiting them with the heaviest punishment. So tyrannically did passion govern the Sodomites, that unless preserved by miraculous interposition, Lot, along with his illustrious strangers, would have fallen victims to its fury. Graciously, however, as Lot had all along been dealt by, faithfully as he had protested against abounding iniquity around him, and deeply anxious as he appears to have been for the safety of his relatives, it is necessary to remark three occasions, in this chapter, on which depravity usurped the place of religious principle in his mind, and betrayed him into conduct altogether indefensible. In ver. 8. he made a most wicked concession to the multitude, immediately before they were smitten with blindness; in ver. 16. he *lingered* in the devoted city until forced away from it; and, in the conclusion of the chapter, he appears in circumstances at which, on reflection, he must have shuddered. In the first of these cases, he forgot that no combination of events can warrant the violation of God's law; that in spite of persecutions, however sanguinary, its letter as well as its spirit must be obeyed. In the second case, he ought to have fled, with alacrity, for his life, when peremptorily commanded to do so. In the third case, one crime led to another, which, till the day of his death, must have proved to him a source of bitter regret. It is impossible to read this portion of Lot's history, without deploring that a righteous man, one who had found favour with God, and had withstood the contaminations of Sodom, should have left so foul a blot upon his memory. Ver. 24. Numberless are the ways in which God may punish his adversaries; already, with the exception of a small company, he had swept mankind from the earth by a flood, and now, with the exception of Lot and his friends, he buries all the inhabitants of the plain under showers of fire and brimstone. The expression, 'from the Lord out of heaven,' was obviously meant to intimate that the calamity was not

the result of natural causes, but an immediate visitation from the hand of the Almighty. Ver. 26. Lot's wife became a pillar of salt, or sulphurous matter, to be a memorial of the guilt of trifling with a divine command. Josephus mentions that the pillar was standing in his day, about 1900 years after the destruction of Sodom.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How desperately wicked by nature are the hearts of men; how sad a proof does this passage afford of the ungodly principles with which they are filled; how much are grace and the operation of God's Spirit required to subdue and rescue us from their dominion! When reading of the wickedness of others, let us not forget our own, and how obnoxious we must personally be in the sight of one who cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence. Justly might God visit us with as awful a doom, as that with which he visited the inhabitants of the plain; and yet, in mercy, he is proclaiming to every sinner, 'Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, lest thou be consumed.' Within the gospel refuge there is pardon for guilt, peace with God, union to the Saviour, and the possession of all the gifts and graces of the Spirit. Without that refuge all are the enemies of God, slaves to their guilty passions, and crucifiers afresh of the Saviour. How long will sinners refuse to consult their highest interest, and register up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and neglect a salvation unspeakably precious. Let them not be deceived. The judgments of God are progressing with unerring certainty; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he assuredly reap. On the morning on which the Sodomites were destroyed, they were as hardy and profligate as ever, imagining that no calamity was near, but before the evening came, they were all in eternity. This very night our souls may be required of us; before another day, our everlasting destiny may be sealed. Let us examine our hearts, then, whether we be in the faith; and if, through divine grace, we are so, let our light so shine before others, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father in heaven.

PRAYER.

O most holy and ever blessed God, we desire this morning to come to thy footstool, in the name of Christ, penetrated with a sense of our unworthiness, and mourning our apostacy from thee as the alone cause of all our misery. When we think of the dignity with which man was originally invested; of the knowledge, and righteousness, and holiness which characterized his nature; and of the communion which thou didst condescend freely to hold with him; and then examine the present state of our hearts, their ignorance of spiritual things, their unrighteousness and sin, and the disinclination which we naturally cherish for intercourse with our God; it becomes us to lie low in the dust, and confess that the crown has fallen from our heads, and that woe is unto all of us because we are sinners.

We lament, O Lord, the provocations which, day after day, we are giving thee; the weakness of our faith; the coldness of our love; the little interest with which we read thy word; the insensibility which often overtakes us in prayer; the sinful thoughts which pervade our minds; the unguarded words which escape from our lips; and the unholy deeds which we perform. Truly may we say that our iniquities have grown over our heads; that we are desperately wicked; that we are the children of wrath, even as others. Eternal thanks be unto the Lord our God, that a Saviour has been provided, through whom we may come into thy presence, and whose merit we may plead as a ground for our forgiveness. We bless thee that this Saviour is revealed unto us in all his freeness, in all his mercy, and in all his grace. O grant that we may be savingly united to him; that our guilt, for his sake, may be pardoned, and our souls cleansed from the pollution of sin. May the Holy Spirit strengthen us for the obedience of thy will; and, amid abounding iniquity, may we be enabled to manifest a walk and conversation becoming the gospel; never shrinking from any trial or persecution into which we may be thrown, for righteousness' sake. Put an end to idolatry and wickedness every where; hasten the period when all shall know thee, from the least even to the greatest; when, at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, and when all kindreds and tongues shall call Him blessed. Accept of our thanksgivings for the mercies of the past night and this morning. Be with us in the duties to which we may this day be called. Suffer us never to forget that an omniscient God is present with us, and that a day is fast approaching when a solemn account is to be rendered unto thee for every thing done in the body. Keep us ever in thy fear, guide us by thy counsel, and receive us at last to see thy salvation in glory, for Christ our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXIV.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

When John despatched his two disciples with the question, mentioned in ver. 3. he was a prisoner in the castle of Macherus, into which he had been thrown, for no other reason than that he had reproved Herod for marrying his brother's wife. A variety of opinions have been entertained regarding the origin of this question. Some have supposed

that the disciples of John, puzzled by the protracted imprisonment of their master, and that no effort was made for his release, began to doubt the Messiahship of Jesus, and were therefore sent to converse with him personally, in order to receive a confirmation of their faith. Others have supposed that the Baptist's mind, not yet fully enlightened as to the nature of Christ's mission, and unable to account for the treatment he was receiving, yielded to a temporary despondency, and dictated this application to Jesus, with the view of obtaining additional grounds on which to rest its faith, and bear up under its trials. On either supposition, the method employed by our Lord was well calculated to remove the doubt, and demonstrate the reality of his claims. The disciples were privileged to witness the miracles Jesus performing, and to hear from his own lips the fulfilment, in his person, of the Old Testament prophecies. On their departure, a memorable eulogy was pronounced on the character and work of the Baptist. Ver. 7—16. *He was more than a prophet.* Inspired men who preceded him, told much of the mission and spiritual achievements of the Saviour, but it was reserved for John to point to him, in the name of humanity, and say, *Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!* The Jews, interpreting literally Mal. iv. 5, 6. expected that, previous to the advent of Messiah, Elias the prophet would re-appear in the world; the words, *This is he which was for to come*, struck at the root of this erroneous interpretation, and identified John with the individual prophesied of, who, with the same spirit of boldness, and power in advocating truth, which were manifested by Elias, would preach and enforce the claims of Jesus when he came. From the preface, given by Luke vii. 29, 30. to the address running in this chapter from ver. 16—20. it is evident that the pharisees and lawyers were principally in view, whom nothing could allure into a recognition of the divinity of Jesus. From ver. 20—25. a fearful doom is pronounced against those cities who rejected the force of his miracles, and displayed an obstinate obstinacy in sin. From ver. 25—28. Jesus, who knew the counsels of his Father, and the multitude and efficacy with which they were fulfilled, gives thanks for the wisdom with which they were contrived, and signifies his acquiescence in the mode of their accomplishment. In the conclusion of the chapter, notwithstanding the infidelity and perverse captiousness with which his labours were derided, Christ proclaims the gospel, in all its fullness, to the multitude around him, calling upon those who were labouring under a sense of guilt, to come unto him, and receive rest to their souls. No man fetters the invitation; how wicked soever a man was, however violent his resentment of it, however weighty the terrors of judgment may have been lying on his conscience, the blessed call is, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

It is a dreadful reflection that, in spite of the clear and undoubted proofs vouchsafed by our Lord that he was the Son of God, so comparatively few,

during his own ministry, yielded to his claims; that so great a number who heard, from his own mouth, the divine doctrines which he taught, the unequalled expositions which he gave of the moral law, his transcendent views of the justice, and mercy, and long-suffering of the Almighty, and who saw the stupendous deeds which, in his own name, and by his own power, he performed, the sick healed, the lepers cleansed, the deaf made to hear, the lame to walk, and the dead to come into life—continued to stigmatise and pour calumny on his character. Not less dreadful is it to think that, hedged around as the gospel is with so many and such challengeless proofs of its divinity, which successive ages are continuing to strengthen, there should still be found not a few who take offence at the Saviour, and reject and blaspheme him. What is the reason of this? The cause of offence lies within; infidelity is not a disease of the intellect but of the heart; it does not arise from a deficiency of evidence, but from an unregenerated mind, at all hazards, at the expense of reason and common honesty, determined to reject truth. To every doctrine and principle inculcated in the Bible it is an enemy. Nothing but the grace of God can subdue its carnality, and lead it to appreciate and receive the truth as it is in Jesus. Believers therefore should pray, that this grace may be more and more vouchsafed, until all shall know and love Christ, from the least even to the greatest.

O let us beware, lest in any of us there be an evil heart of unbelief. We claim the name of Christians, but are we Christians indeed? Is there no lurking offence at any of the doctrines which Christ taught, any of the sanctifying precepts which he inculcated, any of the dispensations of providence with which we have been visited, any of the ways by which he is leading his people to a city of habitation? To the extent to which there is so, we are offended at Christ, and dishonouring his name.

PRAYER.

Most blessed and gracious Father, thou art infinitely holy, and how shall polluted creatures present themselves before thee; thou art infinitely just, and how shall rebels against thy government come to thy footstool; thou art infinitely wise, and how shall we, who have preferred our own folly, venture to commune with thee. See God our shield, look upon us in the face of thine Anointed. We come not concealing our sins, but, sensible of our great depravity, and of the outrages which we have committed against thy law, that, through the Lord, our righteousness, we may be forgiven, and obtain grace to subdue our carnal mindedness, to deliver us from the evil of sin, and to make us walk more holily before thee in the land of the living. We magnify thy name for the redemption of sinners, for the love which thou bearest to thine own, for the care with which thou watchest over them, and for the comforting assurances which their

souls receive from thy Spirit, that they are the heirs of glory. We bless thee for the animating prospects to which thou art encouraging believers to look as their portion when time shall be no more. O make us thy children indeed, interested in the new covenant of grace, and heirs of the promises. May the Holy Spirit dwell within us, to sanctify, and comfort, and enlighten our souls, to give us wisdom to believe the record which thou hast given of thy Son, confidence in the mercy of the dispensation, and more ardent desires after conformity to thy will. Lord, impress upon our minds the dreadful fate of those who continue at a distance from thee, and enable us to strive and pray that they may come to the Saviour, and obtain from him peace, and rest, and eternal joy. Humble thine enemies under the sceptre of mercy, and may the lips that now blaspheme thy name, soon praise and adore the workings of thy sovereign grace.

Thou, O Lord, never slumberest nor sleepest, and we commend ourselves to thy watchful providence during this night. Save us, we beseech thee, from danger and from ill. Never leave us nor forsake us, but keep us in thy fear, and guide us always by thy counsel. May we die the death of the righteous, and may our last end be like his. Hear us in heaven thy dwelling place, and grant us a gracious answer to this our humble prayer, through Christ, our blessed Redeemer. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 11.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. This chapter furnishes one instance of the faithful impartiality of the sacred record. The scripture makes no concealment of the blemishes which mark the fairest characters. The fault of Abraham was attended with this aggravation, that this was at least the second occasion on which he had been guilty of it, (chap. xii. 13,) nay, it would seem, even from the terms of his apology (ver. 13.), that he had formed the resolution of resorting to this equivocation, whenever he might suppose it necessary for his safety.

Ver. 3—8. The consequences of this false step had well nigh proved fatal, both to Abraham and to others. God, however, preserved him; and that by a method which at once checked the sin of Abimelech, and made him the instrument of reproving Abraham. Acting in accordance with a then common lawless practice, the king of Gerar had sent and taken Sarah. But God prevented him from carrying his sinful purpose into effect. In a dream, by night,

he informed him that the woman whom he had taken was the wife of another. Jehovah 'holdeth the hearts of all men in his hand.' The upright he keepeth 'as the apple of the eye;' and, even when he corrects them for their sins, he preserves them from their fatal effects. In excuse for his meditated sin, Abimelech pled ignorance of the fact that Sarah was the wife of Abraham, and his plea was accepted. Wilful ignorance will never excuse, but that of Abimelech was not wilful. He had been misled both by Abraham and Sarah herself. Ver. 9, 10. Abimelech had good cause to blame the conduct of Abraham; yet, like most men, he overlooked his *own* fault. Though his excuse of ignorance was so far accepted, he had yet been guilty of a crime, and for this the Lord had punished him. He had done what he had no right to do, in sending and taking Sarah, even although she had been unmarried. But this, it would seem, does not occur to him. He adverts only to the equivocation of Abraham, and to the danger to which, through it, he had been exposed; forgetting that, but for his own unwarrantable conduct, there would have been no occasion for Abraham's resorting to this disguise. We can readily observe the mote in our brother's eye, while the beam in our own is unperceived. Ver. 11—13. Yet Abimelech had too much reason to reprove the patriarch. It was humiliating to Abraham to be questioned by the king of Gerar. No sin appears so heinous as that which deforms the character of a saint. And what was the patriarch's apology? He knew the wickedness of the place, the violence of those who fear not God, and that the only effectual restraint did not exist here; 'I thought surely the fear of God is not in this place;' he was afraid of his life, and had, therefore, resorted to his preconcerted deception. It was proper thus distinctly to stigmatise the wickedness and violence of Gerar, yet vain was his excuse. It seems to have satisfied the king, for he knew that there was truth in the allegation; but alas, it was only a confession of guilt. Although the statement which he and Sarah had agreed to make was not untrue, (ver. 12,) it was, nevertheless, an attempt to deceive. It was intended by them to be received as a denial of their relation as husband and wife; and it is in the intention to deceive, that the guilt of lying or equivocating consists. Ver. 14—16. Although the patriarch was thus guilty, it was Abimelech who had committed injury, and accordingly we find him making restitution. His conduct amounted to an acknowledgment of his own sin, while he justly reproves Abraham and Sarah for theirs. Ver. 17, 18. We must repent and turn from our sins, if we hope to be forgiven, and to have the hand of God removed from us.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Let us beware of unbelief. This was the root of Abraham's sin. He distrusted the protection of that God at whose command he had formerly gone out, not knowing whither he went. If he watch not unto prayer, the Christian may fall even in those graces for which he is most distinguished. No warning can be more striking than that afforded by the Father of the faithful falling, through want

lith. 'Lie not one to another.' Every attempt to deceive, whether by word or by deed, is contrary to the command of God. And let us gratefully remember who it is that keepeth back the wickedness of the wicked. 'I withheld thee from sinning against me.' But for God's overruling providence and restraining grace, wickedness 'would come in like a flood,' sweeping off the godly from the earth.

PRAYER.

Ever blessed Jehovah, O enable us, by thy grace, this morning, to draw near unto thee with deep reverence and godly fear. We are thy dependent creatures; thy disobedient children. How shall we approach thy glorious majesty? Thou art the blessed and only potentate; glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. Thou art very great: thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Thou coverest thyself with light as with a garment. We prostrate ourselves before thee, humbly supplicating that God would be merciful to us sinners. And blessed be thy glorious name, we are encouraged to approach thee as a gracious Father. Thou hast commanded us to pray always, with all prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving. Yea, we have confidence to draw near by that new and living way which Jesus hath opened up and consecrated with his blood. The desire of our souls is to thy name: with our souls have we desired thee in the night, and with our spirits within us will we seek thee early. We rejoice that there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. In him, O Lord, may we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

And seeing, O most blessed God, we are in ourselves so weak, and exposed to such dangers from the allurements of the world, the temptations of the deceiver, and the corruptions of our own hearts, may we obtain mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. O Lord, grant us the teaching and the guidance of thy good Spirit, that he may lead us into all truth, and uphold our goings. May we be indeed followers of them who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises; the spiritual children of faithful Abraham, and heirs with him of the grace of God. But may we take no encouragement, from the errors of thy people, to continue in the practice of any known sin, or to fail in any known duty, or to yield to any known temptation. May we never, in any case, do evil that good may come. May we at no time swerve from the truth, but speak every man truth with his neighbour, knowing that the lips of truth shall be established, but that a lying tongue is but for a moment. Make us, in every

deed, the followers of Jesus Christ, in whose mouth no guile was found. Hold thou up our goings, that our footsteps slip not. Make thy grace sufficient for us. Let thy word be a lamp unto our path and a light to our feet.

We give thanks unto the Keeper of Israel, for the rest and protection of the past night. We supplicate thy blessing to be upon us throughout the day. Be thou with us in all our employments. Keep us from all evil. Strengthen us for every duty. Enable us to resist every temptation. Grant that, this day, whatsoever we do, in word or in deed, we may do all in the name of Jesus, and giving thanks unto God, even the Father, through him. And unto thee, the Father, the Son, and the blessed Spirit, be all glory ascribed, both now and for ever. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXIX. 7.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XII. 1—21.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The leading topic in these verses, is one, the importance of which we cannot over-estimate, viz., the duty and privilege of keeping holy the sabbath of the Lord. It is to the Jewish sabbath, no doubt, that our Saviour refers, but his teaching is equally applicable to the Christian sabbath. The observance of this sacred ordinance is as really binding upon us, as it was upon the Jewish church. The time of its institution, the reason given for its appointment, the place which it occupies in the decalogue, and the designs which it is intended to serve, refer to all men alike. In the passage before us, we have a view of what our Saviour has taught respecting its observance; the kind of rest which it implied, with the limitations and exceptions which he admitted. While the pharisees, in our Saviour's time, neglected the weightier matters of the law, they were most scrupulous in their attention to the external services of religion, and especially those which they had received by tradition from the fathers. Ver. 1, 2. We find them here blaming the disciples, not for plucking ears of corn, which were not their own property, for, in such circumstances, this was allowed by their law, (Deut. xxiii. 25.) but for doing what they conceived to be servile work on the Sabbath day. Our Saviour replies to their accusation. The first part of his answer is founded upon the declaration, that God would have mercy rather than sacrifice; and that the very end of the sabbath, while a due homage to God, was, at the same time, an institution of mercy to man, and that to satisfy the necessities of nature was no violation of it; that works of necessity and mercy are lawful on the sabbath day. This he illustrates by a case to which a Jew could not object, ver. 5. being sanctioned by such examples, and by the Spirit of God.

The necessary service of the temple also required that, on the sacred day, the priests should do certain works with their hands. Ver. 6—8. The pharisees might urge that the nature of the labour and the holiness of the cause, sanctified the servile work performed. Our Lord, therefore, reminds them, that God prefers mercy even to sacrifice, and if work was justified in the one case, still more was it so in the other. But he answers them on other grounds. He asserts his own authority, as Lord even of the sabbath-day; not, to be sure, to annul a moral law, but to interpret it. 'And if,' says he, 'the temple sanctifies the labour necessary in its whole external worship, greater is the holiness of the true and spiritual temple, to free all its worshippers from blame, whilst performing such duties as piety requires.' Ver. 9—13. Having defended his disciples in this matter, he forthwith himself performs a work of mercy. Ver. 11, 12. And in answer to the malevolent question of the pharisees, proposes another, to which they could not reply without condemning themselves. Even according to their own conduct, he was justified in healing the man which had his hand withered. Ver. 14. To answer the objections of the wicked and unbelieving, is frequently only to exasperate their malevolence. Ver. 14—16. 'His time was not yet come,' and rather than occasion a tumult among the people, who would even have taken him by force and made him a king, he withdraws from the scene of strife. Ver. 17—21. In so doing he was just fulfilling the ancient prophecy, in which his character and work had been so strikingly described.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The conduct of the pharisees, who attempted to conceal their hatred of our Lord under the semblance of zeal for the law, should be full of warning to us. Of all kinds of hypocrisy, that surely is the worst which not only assumes the garb of outward piety, but does so for the very purpose of concealing sin, and even of accomplishing the ends of malevolence. The just rights of conscience are peculiarly sacred; but for this very reason, so much more aggravated is the sin of prostituting its rights to an unholy end. Let us beware of contenting ourselves with the letter, while we neglect the spirit of ordinances. Let us keep sacred and entire the sabbath of the Lord. To us let it be as indeed the day of rest which God himself has given; a type of the everlasting rest which remaineth for the people of God, in which there shall be no more sorrow, nor toil, nor suffering, but everlasting jubilee, in the presence of God and of the Lamb.

PRAYER.

Most merciful and most glorious Jehovah, we would, this evening, bow ourselves before thee, the most high God, our creator, our preserver; the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. O teach us how to pray. Give us thy Holy Spirit, the spirit of adoption, whereby we may cry, Abba, Father. We cannot of ourselves order our speech, by reason of darkness. Enable thou us to worship thee in spirit and in truth.

Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou art great, and dost wondrous things; thou art God alone.

We pray, most merciful Father, that we may not be permitted to deceive ourselves. Thee we cannot deceive, for all things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Thou searchest the heart and triest the reins, that thou mayest give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. But our hearts are deceitful above all things. Search us, O Lord, and know our hearts; try us, and know our thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting. Let us not incur the guilt of those who make religion a cloak to their sins; but may we be enabled to maintain a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. We give thee thanks for the temporal mercies which we enjoy. But especially do we give thee thanks for the rich provision which thou hast made for the supply of our spiritual wants. Thanks be unto God for Jesus Christ, his unspeakable gift. May he be made unto us righteousness, and wisdom, and sanctification, and redemption.

We bless thee, O God, for the ordinances of religion. The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage. Enable us, O Lord, to value and improve all our privileges. May thy word be dearer to us than thousands of gold or silver: that it may not, at length, be to our condemnation that light hath come into the world. May the sabbath of the Lord ever be to us a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable. May we never be contented with that bodily service which profiteth little; but, consecrated to thee in soul, and body, and spirit, present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, through Jesus Christ. We desire to live by faith upon thy Son. We desire to be made partakers of his Spirit, and to be enabled, while discharging, with fidelity, every present duty, to have our affections set upon the things which are above. Make our bodies the temples of the Holy Ghost, and let thy gracious Spirit witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

We bless thee for all the goodness which thou hast, this day, made to pass before us. In the blood of Jesus blot out all the guilt which we may, this day, have contracted. Take us under thy protection during the night. May the angel of the Lord encamp around us. We would remember thee upon our bed, and meditate on thee

in the night watches. Uphold, protect, and guide us during all the days and all the nights of our appointed pilgrimage, and at length graciously receive us to the city of habitation; through Jesus Christ our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRaise—PsALM XL. 15.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XXI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. The covenant-keeping Jehovah is faithful to all his promises. It had been promised to Abraham that he should have a son, and that, in his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. For many years the fulfilment of this promise had been delayed. His faith and patience had long been tried; and not until all appearances were against it, Sarah and her husband being 'as good as dead,' was the special promise made, that Sarah should have a son. Now the prediction is accomplished. God is a man, that he should lie. Ver. 3, 4. As the Lord had commanded, the child is named Isaac, or laughter. His birth was an event full of joy. He is the child of promise. But the certainty of the covenant-promise does not make the patriarch forgetful of his own duty. He does not omit the seal of the covenant which the Lord God had appointed. Ver. 5, 6, 7. The fulfilment of part of a promise will sometimes overcome all the unbelief of the doubting. Sarah is now assured that, in Isaac, all nations shall be blessed; that all who hear her will laugh with her. Ver. 8—11. But the portion of every one is a mixed cup. In the midst of our highest joys, sorrows will sometimes arise. Already he that was afterwards the flesh, began to persecute him that was afterwards the Spirit. (Gal. iv. 29.) God sometimes leads the sins into which his people fall, the sources of their sorest trials. The wayward disposition of his first-born son, born of the bond-woman, grieved Abraham; the imperious demand of Sarah grieved him not less. He loved his son, and would not willingly part with him. Ver. 12, 13. God brings his people out of those difficulties into which their own sins have led them. He eases Abraham's mind. What seemed to be only the result of Sarah's displeasure, according to the counsel of God. Her wrath was fulfilling his design. The promise of God is a security for the preservation and well-being of Isaac and Ishmael. Ver. 14. We are commanded to deny ourselves, and, when God commands, a man will not 'consult with flesh and blood.' Ver. 15—17. Abraham, in the promise of God, had the security for the outcast wanderers. Temporary distresses, however, are not inconsistent with the promise that our bread shall be given us, and that our water shall be sure. To teach us dependence, we may sometimes be reduced to the same distress, but 'man's extremity is God's opportunity.' He is full of compassion. His ear is open

to the groans of all the wretched. Ver. 18—21. Our faith is apt to fail in the midst of suffering and danger. We require constantly to 'watch and pray.' When we remember the case of the disciples, in the hour of their Master's extremity, we need not wonder that the poor bond-woman forgot the promise made to her on a former occasion of great distress, chap. xvi. 10—12. But God is pleased to repeat that promise, and, as a pledge that in due time all shall be fulfilled, he sends her immediate relief. 'To God the Lord belong the issues from death.'—'He redeemeth our lives from destruction; he crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercies.' Ver. 22—32. At the call of Jehovah, Abraham had forsaken 'his country, and his kindred, and his father's house,' and 'gone out, not knowing whither he went;' and now, according to his promise, God had 'made his name great.' The princes of the land where he is sojourning are anxious to enter into covenant with him. 'Them that honour me,' saith the Lord, 'I will honour.' And thus hath Jesus promised, 'And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.' Ver. 33, 34. A good man, wherever he may sojourn, will not neglect the worship of God. He will call on the name of the Lord.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1—5. Let us learn to live by faith in God. Let us follow the footsteps of faithful Abraham, who saw afar off the coming of the Lord, and was glad. Committed to him, our eternal interests are secure. 'In him all the promises of God are yea, and in him amen.' Ver. 6, 7. Let it be to us an unfailing source of gratitude and joy, that 'unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace.' Ver. 12—21. We must learn to submit willingly to all God's appointments, even when they are severe to flesh and blood. Thus acting, we may be assured that, under every trial, he will support us. To his care let us intrust ourselves, and our children, and all our interests. 'Cast thy burden on the Lord; he will sustain thee.' Ver. 22—34. Let us so conduct ourselves that others, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father in heaven.

PRAYER.

Be pleased, O most gracious Father, to look down in mercy upon us thy sinful creatures, while we, this morning, venture to draw near to the footstool of the eternal throne. Let not the Lord be angry that we, who are but dust and ashes, take upon us to speak unto the Most High. See, O God, our shield; look upon us in the face of thine anointed Son. Thine own most gracious invitations encourage us to approach thee. We indeed are less than the least of thy mercies; we have incurred thy just displeasure. We are by nature the children of wrath. If thou, Lord, should mark iniquities, who, O Lord, should stand? But there is forgiveness with

thee, that thou mayest be feared; with thee there is mercy and plenteous redemption. Thou art a God that keepeth covenant; faithful and true art thou. In thee, O Lord, we will rejoice, we will be glad in the God of our salvation, for thou hast remembered thy promise, and done great things for us. Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Thou hast visited and redeemed thy people, and raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of thy servant David.

The Lord grant that this Saviour we may be enabled to follow through good report and through bad report. We pray that thy grace may enable us to submit ourselves willingly to all the dealings of thy most wise and holy providence. In the hour of affliction may we recognise the hand of a merciful and gracious Father, and say, 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth to him good.' Sanctify to us all thy visitations, and, according to thy gracious word, cause all things to work together for our good. Heavenly Father, be thou our God and our guide; under trials support us; in dangers defend us; keep thou our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. In the day of our distress lead us to the Rock that is higher than we; and when our spirits are depressed and our souls ready to faint, open thou our eyes, and discover to us the wells of thy salvation, that we may drink, and be refreshed with the waters of life. O let us never wander from the right path, but, as strangers and pilgrims, having our faces Zionward, and our conversation in heaven, may we be ever looking for the coming of the Lord. Let nothing, at any time, seduce us from thy worship. May we walk in all thy ordinances and commandments blameless, showing forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light, as becometh those who are truly thy servants; who are not their own, being bought with a price, even with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

We desire, with grateful hearts, to thank thee for thy goodness to us during the silent watches of the past night. We laid us down and slept: we awaked; for thy hand sustained us. Be thou our guide and our protection throughout the day. Strengthen us for duty; preserve us from sin. To thy care and blessing we commend the prosperity of Zion, all our friends, and all in whom our hearts are interested. And to thee, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be all glory, both now and for ever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XII. 22—50.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 22, 23. In our Saviour's time a more than ordinary power, even over the bodies of men, seems to have been permitted to the devil and his emissaries, as if to give opportunity for displaying the divine authority of Jesus, who made even the malice of the wicked to praise him. 'He cast out many devils.' In this instance, as might have been expected, the spectators were filled with astonishment. They were almost persuaded that Jesus was the Messiah. A notable miracle had been performed; and when Messiah should come, would he do any greater works? Ver. 24—27. Our Saviour knew the blasphemous thoughts of the Pharisees, and shows that satan, in testifying by miracles to the holy doctrines of Christ, would destroy his own kingdom. Nay, how could they know that the pretended miracles of their own exorcists, and the miracles of Moses, which they admitted to be real, were not the work of the devil, if they ascribed his to such an agency? Ver. 28, 29. His doctrines and works declared that he was not in league with satan; and since satan was compelled to yield to Jesus, it was obvious that God was with him—that he cast out devils by the power of God, so that they were without excuse. Ver. 30. Satan could not be with him; and not being with him, he would be most violently opposed to him. And Christ warns his hearers that he will permit no neutrality. The nature of his cause forbade it. Ver. 31, 32. Although the gospel proclaims pardon to the chief of sinners, there is a state of mind which, rejecting the offered blessing, precludes the possibility of salvation. What our Saviour specially refers to, it is impossible here to attempt to examine. It seems to imply a malicious speaking against the Holy Ghost, a gainsaying of his testimony in the face of the strongest evidence, and even in the face of the sinner's own convictions. They with whom the Spirit still strives; who are conscious that they do really desire that salvation which Jesus offers, have evidence that this awful guilt is not theirs. Ver. 33. The character of a man's mind is to be judged of by his deeds. By this test, our Saviour should have been fully acquitted from such a charge as the pharisees had made; while they were justly condemned. Ver. 34, 35. Not only the actions, but the words of a man declare the state of his heart. Ver. 34—37. There is no 'a word in our tongue,' 'but God knoweth it;' and even for every foolish, as well as wicked word, we shall at length be called to give account. Ver. 38. No vain man is ever ready to prescribe to God. Numerous signs had already been given, but the Pharisees desire one of a special kind, a sign from heaven (Luke xi. 16.) as if that would have been more convincing than those already vouchsafed. Ver. 39. But God will not be dictated to. He has regard to the humble, but the proud he will resist. Ver. 40. Jesus was indeed, but not at that time, to give them a sign from heaven, when he should have

victorious over death. Ver. 41, 42. If, however, they would not believe the testimony already afforded, neither would they believe though one rose from the dead. This was their condemnation, that light had come into the world, but they loved the darkness rather than the light. Our responsibility is in proportion to our privileges. To whom much is given, of them much shall be required. Ver. 43—45. Those that have enjoyed many privileges and have misimproved them, are generally reduced to a worse condition than those who are not been so highly honoured. It was peculiarly so with the Jews, as their future history testified. And of all, it is true (2 Pet. ii. 20.) 'that, if they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.' Ver. 46—50. How great is the shame of those who do the will of God! The Lord will not be ashamed to call them brethren.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let our Lord's saying, that he that is not with him is against him, be often and solemnly pondered by us: and let us remember that, just as he will acknowledge no middle state of indifference now, so he will acknowledge none in the day of judgment. 'I would,' says he, addressing an ancient church, 'that thou wert cold or hot; since thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.'

Let us learn to appreciate, and pray that we may be enabled, by the grace of God, to improve our privileges. We have been highly favoured. 'The Lord has fallen to us in pleasant places, and we are a goodly heritage.' O let us not despise him who speaketh from heaven! Ours is the 'ministration of the Spirit, which excelleth in glory;' and say it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment, for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for us, if we reject so great salvation.

PRAYER.

'Our Father which art in heaven,' we adore thee unspeakable condescension in that, though thou art the high and lofty One inhabiting eternity, thou dost permit us to draw near and to address thee as our Father. Thousands of angels surround thy throne, worshipping reverently, and in thy presence veiling their faces with their wings; yet dost thou regard the humble and the contrite among the sons of men, and the prayer of the destitute thou wilt not despise. Thou art graciously revealed as the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; as in him, the God and Father of all thy believing people. O give to us thy Spirit, as a Spirit of adoption, and teach us to cry, Abba, Father. Blessed Saviour, we worship thee, as the omniscient One. Thou knowest our thoughts. Thou triest the hearts of the children of men. May we maintain upon our souls an abiding sense of this most solemn truth. May we be

enabled ever to walk as seeing him that is invisible. We rejoice in the victory of him who hath spoiled principalities and powers. The Lord grant that we may be indeed with him, zealously devoted to his cause, and ready to follow the Captain of salvation through good report, and through bad report.

O Lord, preserve thou us from all presumptuous sins; let us not resist or gainsay the Spirit of truth: and take not thou thy Holy Spirit away from us. We do most earnestly desire, that thou wouldest enable us to set a watch upon our lips. May we not forget that death and life are in the power of the tongue, that all foolish talking has been forbidden by thee, and that for every idle and sinful word we shall give account. Let our speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, as befits the ransomed of the Lord. The tongue is verily an unruly member; and with our tongues how often have we dishonoured thee, murmuring at thy dealings, or uttering words of folly. Do thou, O gracious Father, so purify our souls, and fill them with thy grace, that henceforth, out of the good treasure of the heart, we shall bring forth good things.

We bless thy name, for the abundant evidence with which thou hast favoured us of the truth of thy word. Grant that we may have the witness in ourselves—we being enabled, with open face, to behold the glory of the Lord, and being changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. We exult in the resurrection of our Redeemer from the grave, and that as he died and rose again, so his people shall rise also. O may this hope purify us, even as God is pure.

We thank thee for all the goodness which we have this day enjoyed. O have mercy upon those less highly favoured than we. Look down in mercy upon the afflicted, and grant that the Sun of righteousness may speedily shine upon all the kingdoms of this benighted world. To thy care and protection, we now commend ourselves. Watch thou over us during the dark hours of night; and if graciously preserved to behold the dawning of another day, when we awake may we feel ourselves with thee. These our humble prayers, we present in the name of Jesus, our ever blessed Saviour and Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XL. 8.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XXII.

REMARKS.

The devil tempts man by deceiving his perverting his will, corrupting his affec^t.

clining him to what is evil. But God tempts no one in this sense. As he 'cannot himself be tempted with evil, so neither tempteth he any man.' Nevertheless, he 'proves' his servants, 'to know what is in their heart, and whether they will keep his commandments or no.' That it was in this sense and no other that the Lord 'did tempt' Abraham, the apostle Paul plainly intimates in his Epistle to the Hebrews, where, referring to this transaction, he says that Abraham 'was tried.'

The trial to which he was subjected was indeed a sharp one. A son, dutiful, promising, and greatly beloved, must die by a parent's hand; a father's heart must know the misery of living under the expectation of, to it, the greatest of evils, for three days were to intervene ere the sentence should be carried into execution; during all that time he must listen to the dear accents of his son's voice, and yet retain his purpose sad and unshaken; during all that time his busy imagination must be employed in conceiving a mother's woe, perhaps a mother's hate, when he should return, and the 'lad not with him;' and, during all that time, too, he must needs think of the world's severest censure, and make up his mind to part with his reputation, at the same time that he parted with his boy. Moreover it was in the line of Isaac that Messiah was to be born, and, therefore, to sacrifice him was, humanly speaking, to prevent the promises from being fulfilled, the hope of the church from being born, the nations from being saved. Such, then, was the duty to which Abraham was called; a duty more difficult by far than the plucking out a right eye, or the cutting off a right hand; and yet, so firmly was this admirable man persuaded 'that what God commands must be good, and that what he promises is infallible,' that he instantly addresses himself to his heavy task. Nor was his faith more implicit than it was rational; for he considered that God, to whom nothing is impossible, could find ways of vindicating the consistency of the promises he had given, with the deed he had enjoined to be done, for that 'he was able to raise up Isaac even from the dead.' No such event, indeed, as the restoration of a dead man to life had ever yet taken place; but in the absence of a precedent, answerable in every respect to the case in hand, the patriarch reasoned from one that was at least analogous, 'accounting' that 'the same hand which raised Isaac from the dead womb of Sarah can raise him again from the ashes of his sacrifice.' Wherefore he made no delay, but rose up early in the morning, got all things in readiness, set forth upon his journey, came to the place which God had told him of, there built an altar, bound the victim, and raised his hand to slay his son. This sufficed, for 'the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy;' a substitute was provided and Isaac's life spared. And now a voice came down out of the 'excellent glory,' testifying to Abraham that he was greatly beloved, and promising that nations should spring from him, and that he in whom all people should be blessed should be born in his line. And, in regard to this latter promise, it is worthy of being noticed that the transaction which was just closed contained a twofold type of its fulfilment;

for, in the actual sacrifice, Christ was represented as dying, whilst, in Isaac risen from the pile, he was revealed to the eye of faith as the risen Saviour of mankind.

Happy are they who are prepared to sacrifice unto God whatsoever is dearest unto them. The command which requires this, in any particular instance, appears an hard saying to flesh and blood, yet it is expedient to remember, that they who will not sacrifice with Abraham, must not expect to rest with him. Nor do we 'go a warfare at our own charges.' By the grace of God, Abraham was what he was; to this grace all can have 'access by faith in Jesus Christ,' and we are told, upon the highest authority, that it shall be made sufficient for us. Let us, moreover, be assured that, however difficult the duties may be to which we are from time to time called, yet we have but to engage in them, with firm determination and trust in God, and we shall find that many a spot over which we pass, in this our earthly pilgrimage, may be appropriately called Jehovah-jireh, that is, the Lord will provide.

PRAYER.

O Lord, unto thee do we lift up our souls, for thou art God, and there is none else; there is no God besides thee. Clouds and darkness are indeed round about thee, and thy judgments are a great deep; thou doest all thy pleasure, and none can let it, neither may any one say unto thee, What doest thou? Yet thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; in thine administration the absolute sovereignty is infinite wisdom and beneficence, and thou doest all things wisely and well.

Whatsoever thy dispensations, it is for us to bow the head and adore; and whatsoever thy commands, it becometh us to say, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. For it hath ever been the experience of thy people, that although weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning, and that verily the Lord is pitiful and of tender mercy. But, alas, we are prone to take counsel of flesh and blood, and so it comes to pass, that whilst the convinced judgment willeth one thing, the affections will a quite different thing; that what we would, that we do not, but what we hate, that we do; for there is a law in our members, warring against the law of our minds, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin which is in our members. O wretched men that we are! who shall deliver us from the body of this death? May he, whom thou hast anointed to open the prison doors, set us free. May he work in us, by his Spirit, the faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; that faith, in the exercise of which, thy servant was of old enabled to offer up his only begotten son, as a

believing that what thou wilt must be best, and that thy faithfulness in keeping covenant and promise would be made to appear, notwithstanding every difficulty, yea, and every apparent impossibility. May he also, by the same Spirit, shed abroad the love of God in our hearts, and thus rule over us by the law and sceptre appropriate to his kingdom—the law and sceptre of love. May he thus make us willing and obedient, and enable us to say, We delight to do thy will, O our God; yea, thy law is within our heart.

We desire to render unto thee hearty thanks for the mercies of the past night. We bless thee that thou hast spared us to see the light of another day, and that thou art continuing to supply our wants as heretofore. Above all, we would say, thanks be unto God for Jesus Christ, his unspeakable gift. In him may we be found: through his blood may we obtain the remission of all our sins, with a covenant right and title to all the other benefits of his mediation.

We beseech thee to be with us this day, in our going out and coming in. Help us to set thee continually before our face. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. We trust ourselves on thy care; care thou for us. Hear us, O God, and forgive and accept, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRaise—PSALM LXXXIX. 15.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XIII. 1—23.

REMARKS.

Whilst the husbandman proceeds along the highway to the field in which he is about to sow, some portion of the seed he carries with him may chance to escape. Such portion, it is obvious, will never spring into life. There will be no green blade, no ear, no ripening stalk, no 'full corn in the ear.' The beaten pathway affords it no shelter, and the fowls come quickly and devour it up. Moreover, in the field itself, there may be spots where the rock approaches so near to the surface that there is no 'depth' of soil, and, in the case of seed sown in such places, the effect, although different, is equally unprofitable. The green blade, indeed, quickly appears, and the stalk and the ear follow in course; but, all the summer long, it waves useless and sere, and, in autumn, it fills not the bosom of the reaper with sheaves. Or, little may have been done to redeem the ground from the thistly curse, and although the plough may have passed over the surface, the thorns and the briars may be there still, and nothing may be wanting to cherish them into life, save the summer's sun and the summer's dew. To cast the seed into such a field were well nigh vain, since it

will, ere long, be prevented by these from bearing any fruit 'unto perfection.'

Alas, answerable results appear in too many, with respect to that seed which is 'the word of the kingdom,' and which the 'Son of man soweth.' There are persons so thoughtless that they never stay to consider that which is spoken; there are hearts so flinty that the divine seed can effect no lodgement within them; and easily, therefore, doth the watchful and 'wicked one catch it away.' It is but presenting some vanity to the too congenial mind; it is only holding out some polluting image to the heart, and every trace of the word, which may have been heard but a little while before, is effaced. In the case of such there is not even the appearance of any fruit unto holiness. There are others who, on hearing, under certain circumstances, the glad news of pardon, life, and glory, receive them with the liveliest joy, and speak of them with an emotion which the experienced disciple might envy; and yet, having 'no root of deep conviction in themselves, and no real love to holiness,' there needs but some trial of 'mocking,' upon the part of their acquaintances, or some persecution of a domestic or public character, and presently all this fair promise is blasted, and the observer may say with the disciples, 'how soon is the fig-tree withered!' There are yet others who continue to hear the word with apparent seriousness all their lives, but who, nevertheless, bring no fruit unto perfection; for, as briars and thorns do oftentimes choke the seed of the husbandman, so these persons, through the eager desire of getting rich, are tempted to do things which are incompatible with holy living, or they are so concerned about the portion they have obtained, that they are distracted with the fear of losing it; or they are so much set upon station, equipage, and attendance, that although they may impose upon themselves, yet others can clearly see that they 'are not of the Father but of the world.'

However, the picture hath a bright as well as a dark side. The effect of the primeval curse is not yet exhausted, and thorns, and thistles, and many a weed besides, does the ground naturally yield; nevertheless, there are vast tracts of country which, year by year, produce an ample return. And, how pleasing to look upon the meadows when 'covered over with corn,' and yielding some an 'hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, and some thirty-fold!' The counterpart of the rich prospect is to be seen in the moral world, when the great husbandman opens up, by his Spirit, the fallow-ground of the heart, that the divine seed may enter in, when the dews of heavenly grace descend upon it, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and when the precious fruits appear, even 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' That we may contribute, each in his own person, to this fair scene, let us disencumber ourselves of all undue care respecting the world and the world's things; let us attentively hear the word which is spoken to us; let us lay it up in our hearts, and practise it in our lives. And, whilst we thus put forth our own best endeavours, let us, at the same time, wait and pray for the 'promise of the Spirit,' and let us be assured that, as the husbandman, though doomed to eat

his bread in the sweat of his brow, yet finds a real satisfaction in prosecuting the labours of his honest calling, so we shall find a high and solid happiness in cultivating the field of our own hearts, and be cheered onward by the ever-brightening hope that, ere long, they will bear no plants but such as are of heavenly growth, and the fruits of which shall be all copious, and fair, and well-flavoured.

PRAYER.

Blessed and everlasting Lord God, unto whom can we go but unto thee? Thou knowest our frame, thou rememberest that we are dust, and thou hast the words of eternal life. We would make mention of the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ; we would give thee thanks that thou hast filled our mouth with that prevailing argument; and feeling that we cannot hope to be heard for aught that is in ourselves, we would beseech thee to behold our Shield, and to look upon us in the face of thine Anointed. Truly, O God, thou keepest covenant and promise, and thy words be true. Thou causest the west wind to awake, and the south to come; and under their warm influence the snows of winter are dissolved, and the sealed fountains set free, and the earth covered over with a carpet of green. From summer to summer thou visitest the earth and waterest it; thou makest it soft with showers, and thou blessest the springing thereof; the pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn: they shout for joy, they also sing. And thus, according to thy promise, cold and heat, and summer and winter, and seed-time and harvest do not cease; thine hand is opened liberally, and the desire of every living thing is satisfied. Other and more precious seed, even the word of the kingdom, thou wouldest sow in men's hearts, and wouldest cherish it into life by the warm and refreshing influences of thy grace, and wouldest fill all the world with the fragrant fruits of holiness. But, alas, whilst all else is in readiness, we are still backward; and too often, when the word has been cast into the ear, we do not meditate upon it day and night, so that it may pass downward into the heart and take root there; or if, in the day of visitation, and when our soul is poured out within us, we receive it with joy, and speak of it with delight, yet, when trial comes, we do too often fall, and our new experience passeth away as the morning cloud and the early dew; or, although we may wait with regularity upon the preaching of the word, and abound with the leaves of profession, yet we are so beset with cares respecting the present world, and so allured by its pleasures and its gains, that we may well fear that we are bringing no

fruit unto perfection. Yet all this while, season after season is passing away, and we know that if we bear not the fruits of righteousness here, we shall never be transplanted into the paradise of God above. Out of the depths, therefore, would we cry unto thee, O God. Visit us with thy salvation. Take away our hard and stony hearts, and give us hearts of flesh. Make the tree good, and the fruit shall be good also. O when wilt thou come unto us? Wilt thou not revive us, O our God? Our trust is in thee, our hope is in thy word. Well-pleased thou hearest the voice of thy Son's intercession, and rejoicest to glorify his worthy name in the salvation of sinners. Save us, we beseech thee, for his name's sake, and make us, in all respects, what thou wouldest have us to be. Accept of thanksgiving for the mercies we have this day received. Pardon us, we beseech thee, wherein we have done amiss. Look, in thy mercy, upon all the sons and daughters of affliction. Send us, in thy goodness, sound and refreshing sleep. May we lie down in thy fear, and awake in thy favour. Hear, and pardon, and accept, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CVII. 41.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XXIV.

REMARKS.

Putting the hand under the thigh, in taking an oath, was a token of subjection and homage rendered by a servant to his lord. The attentive reader will have noticed the steward's solicitude exactly to acquaint himself with the details of the duty required at his hand, and that too before swearing to perform it faithfully; for in those days, happily, a man making a profession of godliness, would have shuddered so much as to think of tampering with the sanctity of an oath.

In the narrative which this chapter contains, there is much that is instructive. Worldly advantage, through matrimonial alliance, the patriarch did not seek for his son; but, well knowing that the intimate companionship, resulting from such connection, might be either favourable or the reverse, and that in a very high degree, to his spiritual well-being, the good old man was deeply solicitous that Isaac should be united to one who had enjoyed the benefit of godly up-bringing. Such a bride, he was well aware, the land of Canaan could not supply, since all its tribes were sunk in idolatry and vice; and, therefore, he turned his eyes to his country and his kinsfolk, in the east. True, there is evidence that even they 'served other gods,' but it would appear that, in the then state of the world, a connection amongst them was the most hopeful that could

be formed. For we may gather from the 31st and 50th verses of the chapter which has been read, that they conjoined with the service of idols the knowledge and worship of the true God; and then, their residence was at so great a distance from Canaan, as to encourage the hope that, in the event of one of their daughters being espoused unto Isaac, she, influenced no longer by the example of her father's house, would appreciate and adopt a 'more excellent way.' For these reasons he dispatched his servant into Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor, to 'take a wife unto his son Isaac,' and, in doing so, it would appear that he had the perfect concurrence of this last, who, although he was now forty years of age, was yet well pleased to be directed by the matured experience and pious views of his excellent father.

And now, see how God is pleased to give countenance and the happiest issue to measures adopted in his fear, and shaped with a view to his glory! The steward comes to his journey's end, and there makes it his petition to the God of his master Abraham, that he would be pleased to indicate, by certain marks, the damsel whom he had appointed for his servant Isaac; and, ere he has finished with 'speaking and praying,' the maiden comes forth, and, by her kind and obliging deportment, answers to the appointed signs. Moreover, in the providence of God, the minds of Rebecca's natural guardians were pre-disposed to a favourable entertainment of the proposal submitted to them, and the result was, that the wish of Abraham's heart was gratified, since his son obtained, from amongst his kinsfolk, a wife whom 'he loved,' and one who, although not without infirmities, was yet deserving of being loved.

The more general lesson to be learned from this narrative is, that religion ought to enter, as an important element, into every arrangement which we make; and that, if we would be followers of them who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises, we must, in all things, be guided by the views of faith.

The more particular lesson is this, that in entering into a connection so intimate and lasting as that which marriage implies, reference should be had, in a particular manner, to the all-important qualification of personal piety. Ah, how often does it happen that youth's fair promise is effectually nipped, never to put forth bud or blossom more; that in the husband or the wife, we can discern no remains of the early piety which adorned the young man or the maid; and that we can trace the sad change to a disregard of the wise maxim of inspiration, 'be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers!' In the counsel, then, which parents give, in a case of this kind, to their sons and their daughters, let them never forget to impress them with the vast importance of forming a connection only with the pious and the good; and let the young behave themselves, after the example of Isaac, and be guided by the wisdom and experience of those who are older and wiser than themselves, and who 'have no greater joy than in being witnesses of their children's well-being.'

PRAYER.

Lord, thou hast been the dwelling-place of thy people in all generations. Even to old age thou art he, and even to hoary hairs thou dost carry them; thou causest them to flourish like the palm-tree, and to grow like a cedar in Lebanon; whom thou lovest thou lovest unto the end; through thy grace they still bring forth fruit in old age, and thou blessest them in all things. Happy, therefore, is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that man whose God is the Lord. As for us, we confess that iniquities prevail against us. Careful, and troubled about many things, we ask with solicitude, what shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? And we remember not the word which saith, 'seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' Neither, in the arrangements which we make for ourselves, or for those whom thou hast given us in charge, do we set thee sufficiently before our face, nor do we frame them in subserviency to thy glory and our own salvation, but are prone to consult chiefly for worldly advancement, and for the happiness which we imagine is to be found in it. Lord, pardon thy servants in this and all other things. Enter not into judgment with us; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified in virtue of his own doings. But although we are unworthy, yet Christ is worthy. For his name's sake blot out all our iniquities. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God until he have mercy upon us. And we beseech thee, O God, put power into thy word, and teach us effectually that one thing is needful. Make us to know our end and the measure of our days, what it is, that we may know how frail we are. Behold, thou hast made our days as an handbreadth; and our age is as nothing before thee: verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Believing these things, may we seek to lay up enduring riches in that place where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. And in every connection which we form, and every enterprise which we undertake, may we have an eye to thy glory and our own spiritual well-being. Accept, O God, our thanksgivings for thy goodness during the past night. To thee we are indebted for our preservation from one day to another; thou carest for us far more and far better than we are able to care for ourselves. We beseech thee to look in com-

passion upon those who have been full of tossing to and fro until the dawning of the day. Heal their diseases, if it be thy will. O spare them, that they may recover strength, before they go hence and be no more. Sanctify their affliction, and grant that no separation may take place between soul and body, until a full and a final separation has been effected between their souls and their sins. Be with us this day in our going out and coming in. Keep us from evil, that it may not grieve us. Hear us in these our petitions, and, when thou hearest, forgive for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LXII. 7.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XIII. 24—58.

REMARKS.

The gospel had indeed its 'day of small things.' 'The man Christ Jesus,—the carpenter's son,' with his twelve illiterate and humble followers! How unlikely, in human estimation, to effect a revolution throughout the world! Looking to the outward appearance, how aptly were they compared by our Lord himself to a little leaven, or to a grain of mustard-seed, which last is so small, that it was proverbially used to signify a very little thing. And yet, as the leaven which appears at first to be 'lost in the mass of dough, secretly works through it by a speedy, though insensible fermentation, till at length the whole is leavened;' or, as in the genial climes of the East, one of the smallest of seeds gives birth to a plant of such dimensions, that it may be termed a tree; so, he who knoweth the end from the beginning, predicted that the kingdom of heaven, or gospel dispensation, should become conspicuous throughout the world, and exercise a mighty influence upon its destinies. And at the present day, do we not see the fulfilment, in great measure, of this prediction. Compared, indeed, with the latter-day glory, aught which has yet been realized, is only as the shaking of the fig-tree before the vintage has come. But yet, considered absolutely, and in itself, the progress has been wonderful, and they surely are wilfully blind, who see not the finger of God in this matter.

It is, however, melancholy to reflect, that the true subjects of this kingdom are vastly fewer than they appear to be, and that very many persons profess to believe the gospel, who yet feel none of its power. At present they mingle with the sanctified ones, as the tares with the wheat; but the day of separation will come: and in that day their going forth shall be from the presence of the blessed God, and from sights of joy and gladness, and from the voice of song and praise; and their destination will be hell, and their portion woe; and their companionship a companionship of fiends. Then, also, shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Since then, the respective results of an hypocritical profession, and a cordial reception of the gospel are so awfully different, let it be our earnest prayer to the God of all grace, that he would so impress our minds with the unspeakable value of the blessings which it confers, that we may be willing to part with whatever is dearest to us, that we may secure them.

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, we desire, at the conclusion of another day, to draw nigh unto thee in a social and family capacity. Be pleased thyself to draw us as with the cords of affection and the bands of love. Give us to say, with the ardent aspirations of thy servant in the old time, As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth our soul after thee, O God.

We would give thee thanks that thou hast set up a kingdom in this our world—a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and against which the gates of hell shall not be suffered to prevail. We would rejoice in the measure of success which this kingdom, so small in its beginnings, hath already had. Hasten, we beseech thee, the latter-day glory. May the time soon come when thou wilt give thy Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; when in every land he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. We thank thee more especially that this kingdom hath been set up amongst ourselves, and that we have been born in a land of ordinances and a valley of vision. O may we of this household, be made willing and obedient subjects of Messiah's kingdom; so that when the summer is past and the harvest is come, our souls may not be gathered with sinners, but may be bound up in the bundle of life. What we ask for ourselves, we would also beseech in behalf of all whom we ought to bear upon our spirits at a throne of grace. Set up a throne in the heart of each one of our friends, and an altar in all their families. Bless them with thy blessing, even life everlasting. Everywhere restrain abounding sin; let the people praise thee, let all the people praise thee.

We beseech thee to pardon the sins of which we have this day been guilty; for alas, there is no day in all our lives which bears not the mark upon it of some wickedness committed against thee; and that thou art sparing us alive, and continuing to supply our wants, and giving us time and opportunity for repentance; this is not because thou seest any goodness in us, but because thy compassions fail not, and because thy mercy endureth for ever.

We would commit ourselves to thy care.

Watch over us during the watches of the night; preserve us, we entreat thee, from the pestilence that walketh in darkness. Spare us, if it be thy will, that we may see the light of a new day; and enable us to spend all the days of our pilgrimage here in thy fear and service. Guide us with thy counsel while we live, and afterward receive us to glory. And now unto thee, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRaise—PSALM LXXXIX.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XXVII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—4. (compared with ver. 27—33.) The promises of God are unchangeable; and they shall stand of their accomplishment, either through the integrity and perverseness of his own people, or through the impiety and malignant opposition of unbelievers. It was the will of God that Jacob should have the promised blessing, that his seed should inherit the promised land, and that of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ should come, 'who is over all, God blessed forever.' The blind partiality of Isaac for Esau, would not prevent this. Ver. 6—25. The faithfulness and the condescension, and goodness of God, and the fulfilment of his promises, are never more strikingly displayed than when he fulfils these, notwithstanding the unbelief of his people, and by means of the unworthy conduct which their unbelief has created. 'If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.' Ver. 41—46. (compared with chap. xxxi. 38.) But God does not permit the sins of his people to pass unpunished. Reuben's unbelief, and Jacob's and Rebecca's guile endangered the life of Jacob; and caused his banishment, not for 'a few days,' but for 'twenty years'—as a mother's fondness, and a father's home.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1—4. 30—33. How beautifully simple are the narratives of sacred scripture! With what fidelity do they record for our warning and instruction in righteousness, the infirmities and the sins of the children of God. Isaac's liking to Esau's venison, and his partiality for Esau on this point made him forget the purpose and decree of God; and to human appearance, had well nigh led him into the sin of bestowing on Esau the blessing intended for Jacob. No wonder that he trembled very exceedingly, (Heb. 'trembled with great trembling greatly,') when he thought of the duty which he blindly meditated. Let us guard against a taste for the pleasures of the table, and all other sensual gratifications. They never fail to darken the understanding and pervert the judgment. Ver. 5—24. It is the duty and the privilege of believers to entertain, in all circumstances, the most unshaken confidence in the faithfulness and the

power of God; and like Abraham, against hope to believe in hope. The Lord will assuredly fulfil his purposes in such a way, and by such means, as shall glorify his great name; and he cannot but be offended with his people, when, in the spirit of unbelief, they have recourse to guile or falsehood, or any thing sinful, for the accomplishment of what they believe to be the purposes of the Almighty. Let us not stagger at his promises through unbelief; but be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Ver. 34—40. Esau 'for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright: and when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.' If, through divine mercy, we be numbered among the first-born whose names are written in heaven, let us guard our spiritual birth-right with a holy vigilance, striving against sin; and laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, let us run with patience the race set before us.

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever blessed God, we thank thee for all the goodness and mercy which thou hast made to pass before us; for the temporal blessings with which thou hast crowned our lot, and the forbearance with which thou hast followed us in the midst of multiplied provocations and aggravated sins. Above all, we thank thee for the provision which thou hast made for the safety of our immortal souls in the scheme of salvation by Christ Jesus. We thank thee for the promises made unto the fathers, and for the mercy and faithfulness with which thou hast fulfilled these promises in all generations. We praise thy name, that when the fulness of the times had come, thou didst send forth thy Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, and that we might receive the adoption of sons. And we would rejoice together, that through him, whosoever believeth in him is justified from all his iniquities. We confess our sins before thee, and our need of a Saviour, and of salvation by his atoning blood. Convince us of sin; bring us in deep self-abasement and humility of soul to the cross of Christ, and give us grace to believe in the name of the Son of God. May we receive him into our hearts, as all our salvation, and all our desire: and, giving ourselves to him in the bonds of an everlasting covenant, may we walk so as to please him, and have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Save us and our fellow-believers from a spirit of unbelief. May we profit by the example of the saints, whether it be intended to warn us of our danger, or to animate us to growing diligence in the work of our salvation. May the errors into which they fell through an evil heart of unbelief, be the means of saving us from sin-

ning against God in a similar manner; and may we ever be followers of their faith and patience. Lord, lead us not into temptation; keep us from dishonouring thee, by distrusting the promises of thy word, and limiting the holy One of Israel; and employing any means but those which God has sanctioned and approved for the fulfilment of his purposes, and the promotion of the good of others. Be at our right hand this day that we may not be moved. Stablish our hearts in thy fear; strengthen us for every duty, and for every temptation; and whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, may we do all to thy glory. Bless all who are near and dear to us. Encompass them with thy favour as with a shield. Bless all mankind. Let the people praise thee: let all the people praise thee. May thy kingdom come; and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Hear in heaven, thy dwelling-place; and whilst thou hearest, forgive: for all that we would ask is in the name, and through the merits, of Jesus Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCVI. 10—13.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XIV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. A guilty conscience suggests many groundless fears. It makes the tyrant tremble upon his throne; and fills him with apprehensions which neither the shame of acknowledging them, nor any other consideration, can prevent him from confessing. 'The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.' Ver. 3—5. Faithful ministers may expect persecution in one form or in another, from all who are strangers to the fear of God, especially when they denounce the threatenings of the divine law on the favourite vices of their hearers. Ver. 6—12. External accomplishments do not change the heart. A savage disposition has often been found to exist in the fairest female form, and in the most youthful breast. True religion alone can teach men the spirit of gentleness and love. Ver. 13—36. Christ was indeed a teacher sent from God. No man can do the miracles which he did. For who can feed thousands with a few barley-loaves and two small fishes? or who can walk on the water, and still its waves? Of a truth he was the Son of God.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1—11. With what deep humility and lively gratitude, ought we to contemplate the character and conduct of the wicked Herod, and his female relatives! Placed in the same circumstances, and exposed to the same or similar temptations, it is more than probable that we should have exhibited the same

depravity. God has made us to differ. Our opportunities of spiritual improvement have been more abundant; we have been exposed to fewer and less powerful temptations. The restraints of divine Providence, and the sovereign grace of God, have prevented us from going to the same excess of wickedness, or have converted and renewed our souls. Let us be humble and thankful. Ver. 14—21. How rich the compassion of Jesus! All his miracles were miracles of beneficence. He healed the sick—he fed the hungry—he did both with the majesty, the resistless power, and the wonderful beneficence of the Son of God. He permits his people to be tossed with tempests, that he may glorify his great name in their deliverance, and that they may be made to feel their dependence on him. Let us not be slow to trust in him who has the winds and the waves at his command. When our faith is ready to fail us, let us remember the years of the right hand of the Most High, and cry, 'Lord save us.' He will hear our prayer and grant us an answer of peace.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the King eternal, immortal, and invisible—the only wise God. Thou doest according to thy will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; none can stay thy hand, or say unto thee, What doest thou? Thou makest the wrath of man to praise thee, and restrainest the remainder of his wrath. All things are under thy control, and thou hast arranged every event of Providence for the glory of thy great name, and for the good of thy people.

We bless thee, O Lord, that thou hast cast our lot in a land of Christian light and liberty. We thank thee that thou hast given us the knowledge of the everlasting gospel; and that we are permitted to make profession of our faith under the protection of civil authority. Give us grace to value and to improve our privilege, and to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We desire to acknowledge, with deep humility, the sinfulness and depravity of our hearts; the estrangement of our affections from thee, and the numberless transgressions which we have committed against thee. We have broken thy commandments times and ways without number; we have despised the warning-voice of thy providence; we have turned a deaf ear to the merciful invitations of the gospel. Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; we are altogether an unclean thing in thy presence.

Blessed be thy name, there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The riches of thy compassion thou hast sent thy only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins. It is a faithful saying, and worthy of

acceptation, that he came into the world to save sinners. O God, do thou give us an interest in him. Wash us from all our iniquities in his atoning blood; clothe us with his all-perfect righteousness, and impart to our souls the peace which has been purchased through the blood of the cross, the peace which passeth all understanding; and the joy in believing which is full of glory. And save us from the power of sin, and enable us to walk in the paths of righteousness for thy name's sake.

Blessed Jesus, thou who didst feed the hungry and heal the sick, do thou evermore feed our souls with the bread of life. Heal our backslidings, receive us graciously, and love us freely; and enable us to render unto thee the calves of our lips. In every season of difficulty and danger, be thou present to deliver us: that our souls may live and praise thy name.

Preserve us, O God, during the darkness of this night. Give us refreshing sleep: and if it be thy holy will, do thou raise us up on the morning of the Sabbath day. We would hail with gladness, the approach of this day of holy rest. May we be prepared for improving it aright. May thy name be hallowed, and may our Sabbaths on earth be anticipations of the rest which remaineth for the people of God, in heaven. We commend to thy holy keeping, all who are near and dear to us. May they be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus. We pray for all men. May the knowledge of the Lord soon cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. In every place, may incense and a pure offering be presented to the Lord. Comfort the afflicted: prepare the dying for death, and teach us to live in mind of our latter end. Hear our prayers, and accept of us in Christ Jesus our Lord, and to thy name be the glory. Amen.

FOURTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCII. 1—4.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS XIV. XV. XVI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

PSALM XIV. ver. 1—4. All the impiety and wickedness of man has its commencement in the estrangement of the heart from God, and in driving him far from our thoughts; and, when irreligion prevails among a people, corruption and wickedness of every kind are the natural and invariable results. Ver. 5—7. Yet God does not forsake or cast off his peo-

ple. The salvation of Israel has come out of Zion: Christ hath led captivity captive, and glad tidings of great joy have been proclaimed to the spiritual Israel.

PSALM XV. ver. 1—5. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Evil cannot dwell with him, nor the fool stand in his sight. There is no safety, no sure or permanent happiness to any but those who possess the character of his children.

In explanation of the XVI. PSALM there is reason to think that, in the first part of the Psalm, David speaks in his own person, and, whilst he disclaims the idea of being profitable unto his Maker, as a man may be profitable unto himself, he gives thanks to God that he had not been led away by the error of the wicked, and that he had been enabled to choose the Lord as the portion of his inheritance and his cup; that the lines had fallen unto him in pleasant places, and he had received a goodly heritage. In the latter part of the Psalm, David may be considered as personating the Messiah; predicting his resurrection, and anticipating the fulness of joy, in the prospect of which Christ endured the cross, despising the shame.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

PSALM XIV. ver. 1—7. How many are there among men professing Christianity who, in the blindness and folly of an unregenerated heart, practically say 'No God;' deliberately putting away from them the thought of a present Deity, the witness of their thoughts and actions, that they may do their abominable works, and walk in the way of their own hearts! Justly may it be said of such that they have no knowledge. Let us seek to have our place and our lot in the generation of the righteous, and among the sons of God, that he may visit us with his salvation; that we may see the good of his chosen; that we may rejoice in the gladness of his nation, and may glory with his inheritance.

PSALM XV. ver. 1—5. If we have been taught the spirit of the holy Psalmist, and have learned to say, with him, 'one thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple,' let us bear habitually in mind that we cannot, with acceptance, enter the tabernacle of God upon earth, and cannot possibly dwell in his presence in heaven, unless we have attained, in some good measure, to the uprightness and sincerity, the brotherly love and the kind affection of true believers; and let us be continually engaged in cultivating these amiable qualities.

PSALM XVI. ver. 1—11. We cannot sufficiently value the unspeakable privilege of regarding God as our Lord, and the object of our confidence, and of having recourse to him as our preserver and deliverer in every season of difficulty and danger. Those who take refuge in lies, and hide themselves under falsehood, shall have their sorrows multiplied; while all true believers shall find that, trusting in the Lord, mercy shall compass them about. Let us imitate the example of our divine Redeemer, the chief leader and the perfecter of faith, Heb. xii. 2. Like him let us set the Lord always before us, and, in the assured

hope of a blessed resurrection, and the joyful anticipation of the pleasures which are at God's right hand, let us endure with patience every affliction, and strenuously and perseveringly perform all our duties to our Father in heaven.

PRAYER.

Gracious and merciful Jehovah, we look up to thee as the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Thou didst breathe into our nostrils the breath of life, and thy merciful visitation sustains our spirits. We lay ourselves down and sleep: we awake again; for thou, Lord, sustainest us. We thank thee that thou hast been pleased to spare us to behold the light of this day. We bless thee that it is the day which thou hast made; the day of the Lord. May we have grace to account it a delight, the holy of the Lord and honourable; and may we be enabled to honour it, not thinking our own thoughts, or speaking our own words, or doing our own works. Especially may we be enabled to remember, with faith and holy joy, that on this day of the week our blessed Redeemer rose from the dead; the first-fruits of them that sleep; and may we have it, as the testimony of our consciences, that we are risen together with him, our affections being set on the things which are above; the things which are at the right hand of God, where Jesus Christ sitteth. May we be in the Spirit on thy holy day, spiritually minded, which is life and peace.

We would confess, with deep humility, our misimprovement of the means of grace, and the scantiness and deficiency of the fruit which we have brought forth unto thee. Justly mightest thou say, with regard to us, 'Cut them down, why cumber they the ground?' and justly mightest thou remove our candlestick out of its place, and give our privileges to others who should bring forth more abundantly than we the fruits of righteousness. But, behold, thou waitest to be gracious. Thou continuest to give us free access to a throne of grace. Our eyes see our teachers; and, on each returning sabbath, we hear the call addressed to us, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.' Mercifully forgive our unworthiness; cast all our sins behind thy back, and visit us, this day, with the light of thy countenance and the joy of thy salvation. May we profit by every opening of the mouth, and know, in our happy experience, that it is good for us to draw near to God.

Thou hast said that thou wilt dwell with him that is of an humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the hearts of the contrite ones. Visit, this day, we beseech thee, the tabernacles of Jacob, and supply the

wants of thy people who may be reluctantly detained from the house of prayer. Speak peace to their souls, and give them bread to eat which the world knoweth not. Have mercy on the sabbath-breaker, and the despiser of thine ordinances, and give them true repentance ere it be too late, and their feet stumble on the dark mountains.

Go forth with thy servants everywhere in the preaching of the everlasting gospel. Let the word have free course and be glorified. May the ignorant be enlightened. May the hardene and impenitent be convinced. May the mourner be comforted. May believers be built up in their holy faith. May this day be a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and may great grace be upon us all. And to thy name, in Christ, be all the praise. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXII. 5—8.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XVII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

We do not know for certainty, on what occasion this psalm was composed. But we have the strongest reasons for supposing that it was penned by David, at the time of his persecutions by Saul. The psalm has every appearance of having been written by one who, at the time, or shortly before the composition of it, was persecuted with deadly hatred by a multitude of cruel and malignant enemies; and, in these circumstances, 'encouraged himself the Lord his God.' There is no person whose history is recorded in the Old Testament to whom the description in the psalm so accurately applies David; whether we consider the circumstances which the writer appears to have been placed, his confidence in God in the time of affliction. It is not improbable, however, that there may also be reference to the sufferings of Christ the Son of David, and the anti-type of the king of Israel, to his confidence in his Father amidst the persecutions to which he was exposed.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1—6. Let us bear habitually in mind, continual dependence upon God, and in all our approaches to him; let us rely on the all-prevailing intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. But let us also remember that the character of an Israelite, as described by our Lord in these words, 'a man in whom is no guile,' and that our prayer will not be accepted, if it go not out of unfeigned hearts, and if it be not the prayer of one who by the grace of God has been enabled to keep himself from the power of the destroyer. Ver. 7—15. Marvellous is the loving-kindness of God to his people, when they put their trust in him. The protection which he affords

the time of danger and perplexity, is perfect. It is in infinite wisdom and almighty power. In the present peaceful times of the church, we feel but little of the persecuting hatred of the men of the world. But our adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour—as a lion greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion, lurking in secret places: and we have constantly need to pray that the Lord would ‘disappoint and cast him down, that he would deliver our souls from the wicked one.’ The Son of God, the Captain of our salvation, will bruise satan under our feet shortly: and if we commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing, he will enable us to be faithful unto death; and when we awake at the resurrection-day, our best desires shall be fully gratified; we shall behold the face of God in righteousness, and, seeing him as he is, we shall be satisfied with his likeness.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Thine understanding is infinite—thy wisdom is unsearchable—thy kingdom ruleth over all. When we consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, it well becomes us to say, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Blessed be thy name, unworthy though we be, thou hast permitted, yea, commanded, us in Christ Jesus to regard thee as the object of our confidence and love;—in our perplexities to look to thee for wisdom to direct us, in the consciousness of guilt and sinfulness to cast the burden of our sins and our infirmities upon thee; and in the hour of temptation and duty, to rely on the grace which thou hast promised to give us abundantly. Thou hast been the dwelling-place of thy people in the generations that are past, and thou wilt be their refuge and their strength in the generations that are yet to come. May it be given unto us to believe on the name of the Son of God, and believing, may we have life through his name. May Christ be made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

We unite in thanking thee, O Lord, for the mercies and the privileges of this thy holy day; for the opportunities which we have enjoyed in public or in private of waiting upon thee, and for every good impression which may have been made upon our minds by the ordinances of thine appointment. We would be humbled before thee when we think of the sins of our holy things, of the distraction of our minds, and the coldness of our affections while engaged in the solemn services of religion; and the imperfection that has cleaved to our purest desires and our most holy and devout aspirations. Lord, show us thy mercy in the forgiveness of the sins of this day,

and in pouring out so rich and abundant a blessing on our solemn religious observances, as shall assure our hearts before thee, and enable us on looking back on this day’s spiritual sacrifices, to say that a day spent in thy courts is better than a thousand.

Gracious Lord, perfect that which concerneth us. Confirm every good impression made in the private exercises of religion, or in the house of prayer. Hold up our goings in thy paths, that our footsteps may not slip. We know that thou wilt hear us: keep us as the apple of thine eye: and let not our spiritual enemies prevail over us. Give us the victory over the fear of man: and animate us to steadfast and persevering obedience by the assured hope of a glorious resurrection.

Bless thy word preached and heard this day. Let not the seed which has been sown, be caught away by the wicked one, or wither away before temptation and persecution, or be choked by the cares, or the pleasures, or the riches of the world; but may it be as good seed sown in a good soil, and bring forth in some a hundred fold, in some sixty, in some thirty.

Watch over us during the darkness of the night, and, if it be thy will, raise us up in health and comfort on the morning of the coming day. Prepare us for all thy will and all our duty. May goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life; and may we dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. For all that we ask is for Christ’s sake, to whom, with the Father and blessed Spirit, be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXI.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XXVIII.

REMARKS.

Scarcely has the blessing been pronounced on Jacob ere he begins to suffer for the deceit by which he has procured it. His brother seeks his life, and to escape his malice, he is obliged to leave his father’s house and flee to Syria. It is a long journey through an inhospitable wild; and to avoid suspicion and remark, he undertakes it alone. In the course of it, a very singular incident occurs. Weary and benighted, the pilgrim lays him down to rest: the earth his bed, a stone his pillow; a glorious vision bursts upon him in a dream: a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it; the Lord himself stands at the top of it in visible shape, and solemnly ratifies the benediction of Isaac, and vouchsafes to him his promise of perpetual protection. Jacob awakes out of his sleep—reverently confesses a present deity—rises up and consecrates

the stone on which he lay, as a pillar of memorial—names the place Bethel, 'the house of God:' and vows a vow of devotion to the worship and service of heaven, during all his future life.

Let us contemplate in the ladder, an emblem of Jehovah's providential care. Even from his habitation on high he holds constant intercourse with his creatures, and controls all their affairs. And the figure is a striking one, which represents this great truth by angels seen ever and anon descending from heaven to earth charged with commissions from him; and again, in turn, incessantly re-ascending to report them fulfilled, and to ask new ones. Specially let us contemplate in the ladder, an emblem of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the mystic glimpse of Immanuel which it revealed that made it so interesting to the patriarch, and makes it still so interesting to us. By him it is, that a communication has been opened and perpetuated between earth and heaven. He is the day's man that stands between the sinner and God. Through him alone it is, that grace and peace descend from the throne; by him alone can the believer rise to the image of heaven here, and to its fulness of joy and holiness hereafter. 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.' Let us learn that the Lord is a very present help in times of trouble. It was when Jacob needed him most, a poor solitary wanderer,—at midnight, far from the home and the ordinances of his fathers, that he manifested himself to him in peculiar glory. And the experience of believers in every age has confirmed it, that the consolations of the gospel are sweetest far, and strongest when the trials of life are bitterest. 'As thy day, so shall thy strength be,' is an eternal promise, and it never fails. How often at eventide is there light! how often is the valley of Achor given for a door of hope!

The Lord is indeed in every place at all times, and Jacob knew well his omnipresence, even though he cried 'surely the Lord is here.' But, in peculiar times and places, his presence is often more sensibly felt than in others; and every Christian has his Bethel and his stone of memorial. O how many have cried in their hearts in the sanctuary, on a holiday of Zion, over the memorials of Christ's sacrifice, 'This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' Jacob, after the mystic vision, yielded himself up most solemnly to the God of his fathers. How doth it become us to inquire,—What have we rendered unto the Lord for all his goodness? Have we ever seriously begun a religious life? Have we avouched the Lord as our God, and sworn to honour him and serve him in the world? 'O Lord God, thou knowest.' Our hearts' desire is that he would enable us this very morning to consider, in right earnest, the things that belong to our peace—that he would impress on us evermore his own words, 'When thou vowest a vow, defer not to pay it. For God hateth the sacrifice of fools.'

PRAYER.

Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us be stirred up to bless and to magnify

his holy name. It is a pleasant thing to give thanks unto the Lord; to sing praises unto thee, O thou Most High; to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night. Thou hast never left thyself without a witness on the earth: we would remember the wonders done of old, O thou Spirit, who didst speak to the fathers by the prophets. Thou art he who made a covenant with Abraham; who taught thy servant Moses from the flame of fire in the bush; who gave the living oracles from Sinai; who brought up Israel from Egypt, through the wilderness; who showed beforehand to thy church, by type and symbol, the great things which were to come. In these last days thou hast spoken to us by thine own Son. We have seen what many of old sought to see, and were not permitted; we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Our souls would magnify the Lord; our spirits would rejoice in God our Saviour. Now, lettest thou thy servants depart in peace, for our eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel. O God, help us to see that we need a Saviour; help us to feel that the Lord Jesus Christ is the very Saviour we need; deliver us from the pride of heart which prevents men from embracing so humbling a salvation as the gospel of his grace proclaims; dispose us to accept of him humbly and heartily in all his offices, as our Prophet, and Priest, and King. He is the only mediator between God and men; by him alone have we privilege of access to thee; our only hope of heaven is in thy mercy through his blood. The Lord make us partakers of his righteousness; the Lord renew us after his image; the Lord sanctify us through his truth. We believe in him; help thou our unbelief. Build us up, stablish, strengthen, settle us in the faith; every day may we be drawing out of his fulness and living to him. And O evermore, give us to enjoy the consolations of his word in affliction; to be guided by his counsel in difficulty and peril; to be strengthened by his grace and truth in times of temptation. May we find him an ever present God; may we never be ashamed to confess him, and to remember him in his ordinances; may we devote ourselves, heart and soul, to his service, and find strength to keep our vows. Lord, bless this family and all connected with us. Be thou our shepherd and we shall never want. Deliver us from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and from the arrow that wasteth at noon-day; hide us in thy pavilion,

and let thy banner over us be love. Sanctify to us every sabbath we spend, every chapter of thy bible we read, every prayer we offer up together at thy footstool; and let us never forget, that to whom much is given, of them much will be required. Hear in heaven thy dwelling-place, our morning supplications, and forgive us, and accept of us in Christ Jesus. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXI. 5.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XV.

REMARKS.

The scribes and pharisees made void the law by their traditions; and under the pretence of superior precision and sanctity, were the bitterest enemies of the truth. Jesus knew their hearts and took many occasions to expose their deceit, and refute their cavillings, and rebuke their malice. And what he has denounced against them, applies to all in every age, who love sacrifice rather than mercy; who substitute the form for the power of godliness; who draw nigh to God with their lips, and honour him with their mouths, while their hearts are far from him. 'What is the hope of the hypocrite though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? From his death-bed, does he look back to his prayers? they were a mockery of omniscience; to his solemnities? they were a fashion and a pretence; to his zeal for the truth? it was a lying profession with selfish reserves; to the seemliness of his morality? it was a cloak, to hide from the spirit of the law. His religion is found a shadow, just when he needed its consolations most—his trust is as the spider's web.

How wonderful was the faith of the poor woman of Canaan! see her disregarded, repulsed, scorned, yet still persevering in her suit; see her hoping against hope, and with singular ingenuity, turning the very objections argued against her into an argument in her favour! O how beautiful an instance is this of the efficacy of importunate prayer—of the triumph of humility; of the riches of gospel grace; how admirably calculated to animate the faint and weary penitent! How doth it become each one of us to take up her cry, 'O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me;' and despite all disappointment and delay, never to let him go without a blessing. The miracles of Christ were not less remarkable for their love than for their power; not only were they fitted to demonstrate the divinity of his mission, but also to illustrate the doctrines he taught. We have been reading that he had compassion on a great multitude who were three days without food in the wilderness, attending to his instructions; and also that after having fed them abundantly with seven loaves and a few little fishes, seven baskets of fragments were gathered up. Let us never forget, that besides ministering on all occasions of distress to the temporal wants of his people, he has prepared for

them a spiritual feast in his gospel, and invited them all to partake of it, and given them the assurance of a hearty welcome and abundant provision. Let us never forget that himself is the bread of life, and that whoso is privileged to eat of it never hungers again. Lord, evermore give us this bread!

PRAYER.

O Lord, we would receive it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. In his name, and through his merit, we would approach thee in prayer; our only hope of thy favour is for the sake of what he did and suffered for us. O do thou show us more and more of the perfection of his sacrifice, and the fulness of his compassions, and the riches and freeness of his grace. Do thou send down the Spirit of truth to open our understandings, that we may understand aright those things which are spoken of him in the scriptures. Do thou unite us to him by true and living faith; do thou dispose us to cleave unto him as the Lord our righteousness, and the Lord our strength, that our inmost hearts may cry out, None but Christ, none but Christ! O let our souls be nourished by him, from day to day as the hidden manna—the bread which came down from heaven—and when they are ready to faint, let him be to us as water in the wilderness, as a spring in the desert. Lord, deliver us from the hypocrisy of those who desire to appear righteous before men; who are satisfied with a barren profession; who have a name to live while they are dead. God forbid that ours should be merely a religion of show. Create thou in us clean hearts; renew a right spirit within us; and by our daily walk and conversation, may we approve the sincerity of our faith. Our earnest cry, morning and evening, would be, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us. O give us grace, to be humble, and importunate, and persevering in our devotions; let us wait patiently on the Lord, and though he slay us, still trust in him. Lord, we pray for the downfall of satan's kingdom, and the triumphs of the Redeemer's cause among the heathen nations; we pray for peace and charity among all of every name, to whom the tidings of salvation have come; we pray that our Sovereign may reign long and happily over our native land; we pray for our beloved Zion, that grace may be poured out abundantly on all the ministers and all the congregations; we pray for the sick, the afflicted, and the dying: that all may find thee a very present help in time of trouble. Accept of our thanks for thy goodness to us during the past day; we commit us to thy care and keeping during the watches of the night;

underneath us ever be thine everlasting arms.
Hear and answer us in Christ Jesus. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CVI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XXXIX.

REMARKS.

Animated and strengthened by the vision of Bethel, Jacob continued his journey, and reached safely the dwelling-place of Laban. His meeting with Rachel in the fields, as she tended her father's sheep, is described with the most touching simplicity. His heart elung to her at the very first: but Laban was selfish and sordid, and would not consent to their union, except on the condition of his serving with him seven years. It was a harsh proposal, but Jacob willingly acceded to it, and we read, that 'the seven years seemed to him but a few days for the love he had to her.' And it is true still, that where our heart is in a work, the most difficult and laborious work, it becomes pleasant to us; especially is it so in religion. O it were a cold creed that would not let the affections be touched—that would brand the devotion of our deepest and dearest feelings to religion as fanaticism! Every true believer can say, 'the love of Christ constraineth me!' This is the strongest of all the principles that can influence human nature, stronger than all others combined. It has compelled men by a sweet violence, to consecrate all they had and all they could do to the cause of the cross; it has compelled men to renounce riches, reputation, honour, as dross for the gospel's sake; it has compelled men to leave the homes of their fathers, the old familiar faces of their youth, and to go out to the far land, to the desert isles of the sea, to preach to the stranger and the savage, the unsearchable riches of Christ. O it is an indomitable, and indestructible principle, this love of Christ: it sustains the spirit amid the worst perils; it makes the longest trials short!

After the seven years of Jacob's service were ended, Laban, by a most unworthy artifice, cheated him out of the promised reward; and by driving him into polygamy, introduced strife and misery into his household ever after. How strikingly calculated was this to remind the patriarch of his own treachery to his brother Esau; to impress him with a sense of the retributive justice of God! And it were well for us to remember, that very generally, even in this life, a man reaps the fruit of his own evil doings. How often is his sin written as with fire on his punishment! The careless parent may trace it in the ruin of his family; the spendthrift in beggary and disgrace; the miser in the scattering to the winds of his hope and his fortunes; the perjured man and cheat in the scorn and loathing of his fellows; the drunkard in a diseased and withered age before its time. O it is both a tormenting and a silencing scripture, 'as I have done, so hath my God requited me!'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou hast said, that whatever we ask of thee in the name of the Lord Jesus, believing, we shall receive. Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief. We are by nature under the condemnation of the law; justify us through the blood of the great sacrifice. We are corrupt in thought, and word, and deed; renew us after thine own image. Our understandings are darkened; enlighten us by thy good spirit. Our hearts are cold and hard; touch us as with live coal from off thine altar; say unto us, Live, yea, say unto us, Live, and the time will be a time of love. We are weak and helpless in ourselves; let thy grace be sufficient for us; strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die. We are dust, and return to dust again; raise us up together, and make us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. O help us with all our heart, and all our soul, to love him who first loved us; may the love of Christ be the quickening, ruling principle of our lives; may we count all things but loss and dung, that we may be found in him, and do his will. Lord, deliver us from pride, from hypocrisy, from envy, from uncharitableness. Put it into our hearts to hate all fraud and deceit; to be honest in all our ways; ever to do to others as we would that others should do to us. Give us that charity which is the bond of perfectness, which hope and believeth, and endureth all things; and press on us evermore, the new commandment, our Lord to his disciples, 'that they should love one another as he loved them.' Accept of our thanksgiving for thy preservation of us during the night that is past; take us this day under thy care and keeping; lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: and all we do is in the name of Jesus, our strength and Redeemer. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXVI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XVI.

REMARKS.

The pharisees and sadducees laid aside, for a time, their mutual animosities, and directed their united malice against Christ. They tempted him with a request for a sign from heaven, in confirmation of his mission; but he exposed their hypocrisy and their unbelief.

Is it not so still, that many of the enemies of the gospel affect to seek other testimonies to its truth than those that have been given already? They shut their eyes to these, however close, and varied, and in

possible, and wish new ones. They dare to prescribe to God the evidence he ought to have furnished in behalf of his revelation; they will not be convinced except on terms themselves propose. They are perfectly satisfied to act, in common life, on the most slender probabilities; they will be content with nothing short of demonstration, not even with demonstration itself, in religion. Alas, it is not the deficiency of signs, nor the difficulty of interpreting them, that makes men infidel; it is an evil heart. Unless we believe in Christ, for the sake of the words he spoke, and the works he did, and the lives and deaths of his apostles, no other evidence will be given us; and though it were, it would be impotent to convert us. Jesus asked his disciples, 'Whom do men say that I am?' Well doth it become us to put the question to ourselves, 'What think we of Christ?' Do we feel that he is the very Saviour we need? Is he precious in our eye, as he is in whom all the prophecies and types of Old Testament history meet and centre? Can we take up the words of zealous, ardent Peter, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the most high God?' Let us never forget that no one can say in faith, 'That Jesus is the Lord,' but by the Holy Ghost.

It is on this solemn truth that the church is founded as on a rock; blessed be God for the promise that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. How clearly has this promise been verified in its past history? The church of Christ has been tried in every possible way. She has been despised, and ridiculed, and scourged; she has had to contend with kings of the earth, and with traitors within her own walls; she has passed through the calm and the storm together. Is it not fair to argue that, since she has withstood the extravagance of persecution nor of indulgence, neither indifference nor fanaticism, has proved herself able to subvert her, she will continue unscathed to the end. The arm of the omnipotent has been raised in her defence, and she has but emerged from every trouble into which the ungodly have cast her, sometimes as from the very ashes, fresher and stronger than before. Jacob shall arise though he be dead. The ark may be tossed, but it shall never sink. To thousands still the dust of Zion shall be precious, and Jerusalem preferred to their chiefest joy. Let us not rest in vain boastings of the prosperity of Zion, while ourselves have not sought and found a refuge in it. What matters it to me that the malice of men and devils are impotent against me? I have neither part nor lot in the covenant? Is it not enough that we call ourselves by the name of Jesus; unless we have the spirit, unless we take up his cross and follow him, we are none of his. The time is coming when the most careless of us will be brought to confess that this were our best refuge. O what comment can add to the touching, touching pathos of these simple words, 'What is man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'

PRAYER.

O Lord, in thy presence, and at thy footstool, I would plead no other merits than the life and

death of Jesus Christ. We believe that he is indeed the Christ, the Son of the most high God; that he is the Messiah who should come, and that we are to look for no other. Thanks be unto him who came in the name of the Lord to save us; hosannah in the highest! Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; he hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; he is willing to save to the uttermost all who come unto him. See, O God, our Shield. Our souls would magnify the Lord; our spirits would rejoice in God our Saviour. O thou who hast given thy Son for us, and wilt, for his sake, refuse no good thing to them that ask thee, give us faith in the acceptance of his finished work; make him unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; help us to flee for refuge to the hope of his gospel, and to rest in him as all our salvation, and all our desire. Lord, thou knowest our hearts; speak to us, this evening, a word in season. If our burden be a heart of unbelief, lift on us the light of thy truth, and scatter all our doubts; if we are weary and heavy laden, give us the rest of the covenant; if we have a name to live while we are dead, the Lord send even on us an unction from the Holy One; if we are at ease in sin, without spending a serious thought on death and hell, the Lord say unto us, live; if we are panting after the dust of the earth, and laying up our treasures here, O show us the vanity of this world's cares and enjoyments, raise us up out of the fearful pit, out of the miry clay, and put a new song in our mouths, even praise to our God. We confess before thee the sins of the day; we resign us to thy keeping during the night. Dwell thou ever in our household. While we live, may we live to thee; and when thou callest us hence, may death be gain to us. Hear and accept of us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE II.
SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XXXI.

REMARKS.

1. Prosperity has its sorrows as well as adversity. Jacob *formerly* suffered from adversity; he is *now* suffering from prosperity. Twenty years before he was obliged, having nothing but his staff in his hand, chap. xxxii. 10. to flee from the face of his brother Esau; *now*, in his affluence, he is obliged to flee from the face of Laban and his sons in the land of Syria. Jealousy, and envy, and hatred towards him, had filled their minds, on account of the prosperity wherewith God had blessed him, as they conceived,

at *their* expense. They forgot, or overlooked, his patience under the dishonest treatment he had met with at their hands; the faithful and long continued services he had performed for them; the prosperity wherewith they themselves had been blessed on his account; the debt of gratitude they owed to him and his God; and the tender regard they ought to have felt and shown towards him and his wives and children, as members of their own family; as bones of their bones, and flesh of their flesh.

2. What a selfish being is man! What an evil principle the love of the world! It separates the nearest relatives, the choicest friends. It expels or excludes every generous emotion, every holy affection. 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,' 1 John ii. 15.

3. What a mercy, whether we be rich or poor, to know that the God of Jacob changeth not, and that his purposes cannot be frustrated! The same God is equally watchful over our interests, and knows and takes the proper time and way of delivering us out of temptation and difficulty, and the power and malice of enemies. Let us be this day led by the Spirit of our covenant God, as Jacob was; and, in the use of means, above all, in the exercise of faith, let us leave all our concerns, for time and eternity, in the hands of him who died to save us.

4. How much are we indebted to the restraining grace and providential government of God! In this chapter we see how Laban was kept from injuring Jacob; and, in chap. xxxiii. we find that the same restraining grace prevented Esau from injuring him. Were it not for the restraints which God imposes, in an infinite variety of ways, upon the tempers and dispositions of ungodly men, the world would be ten thousand times worse than it is, and the righteous would have no living at all. But let us fear no evil; for if God be for us, who can be against us?

PRAYER.

O God of Jacob, we would approach thee in the name of Jesus, and adore thee in the glorious and endearing character of an electing, a loving, a redeeming, a covenant-making, and covenant-keeping God. We would bless thee for the bible, that reveals thy character, and contains a record of thy dealings with thy people of old. We would rejoice in believing that, however mysterious may be the ways in which thou leadest the objects of thy wondrous love, thou wilt keep them as the apple of thine eye, and bring them at last, by the right way, into a city of habitation. Be pleased to make an everlasting covenant with each one of us, and to manifest thyself unto us, in another way than thou dost unto the world. Dwell in our house as in thy Bethel, and let thy Spirit dwell in our hearts as in his holy temple. Visit us with those communications of thy grace, and intimations of thy

love, and manifestations of thy glory, wherewith thou art sometimes pleased to refresh the soul and lighten the burdens, and sweeten the trouble and guide the steps, and animate the hopes, and elevate the affections of thy weary people.

these unspeakably precious privileges we are utterly unworthy, for our sins are more numerous and aggravated than tongue can tell or heart conceive; but worthy is the Lamb that was slain and in *him* thou art at once a just God and a Saviour. Behold, O God, our Shield. Thou, the riches of thy grace, and wonders of thy love, hast been pleased to appoint thy Son to be our people's shield from the corruption of their own nature, the fiery darts of the wicked one, the temptations of the world, and the curse of a broken law. Enable us, by thy Spirit, to put on and employ aright this shield for the purposes which it is provided. Let Christ be our all in all. Let him be precious to each one of us. Our wants let us have faith wherewith to draw out of his fulness; in our weakness let us be leaning on him for strength; in our fears let us realize the might of Jesus; in our transactions with our fellow-creatures let us imitate his example; and in the multitude of our thoughts within about sin, and the world, and salvation, and death and eternity, let Calvary's cross be the standard guide us; and the grace of the Sufferer the theme of our praise, and the foundation of our hope. Whatever be thy dealings with us this day, bid that we should dishonour thy name, or grieve thy Spirit; and however painful may be duties or trials to which we may be called, let us be supported under them by the assurance we have that the God of Jacob changeth not, and that those whom he hath once loved he loveth, and guideth, and protecteth unto the end. Should the world frown on us, let us have the smiles of thy countenance. Should we be in perplexity, let the God of Bethel direct us. If enemies pursue our souls, let us know that our hiding-place. If we be called to sickness or death, let the Lord hear, and the name of the God of Jacob defend us. With ourselves would bear on our spirits all with whom we are connected. May they be a seal on the heart on the arm of the great high priest before thy throne. May our friends be friends of us, and may our enemies receive forgiveness through his blood. Let all the children of affliction be sanctified and comforted by the Holy Spirit. Let the dying be prepared for their great God. Let the troubled in mind have from thee the peace which the world cannot give. Let ministers of the gospel be faithful and successful. Amen.

kingdom come. Hasten the time, Lord, when the posterity of Jacob shall believe in Jacob's God, and when all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in Jesus Christ, and participate in the glories of his reign. We would thank thee for thy care of us through the past night, and for the mercies of the morning. We would bless thee for all thy goodness towards us in time past. Whatever trials we may have experienced, we still acknowledge that we have more reason to sing of mercy than of judgment, and it is because thy compassions fail not that we are not consumed. Help us to honour thee through the day. Keep us from evil. Sanctify us wholly. Let no weapon formed against us prosper. Let us be found in Christ, and then we shall be safe in life, and death, and through eternity. Hear, pardon, and accept us for his sake, and the glory shall ever be thine in him. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRaise—PSALM XXVII. 4, 5.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XVII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—9. There is a probable tradition that the mount is Tabor, situated near Cana and Nazareth in Galilee. The ascent would probably have occurred a day, and, from this, and other circumstances, it would appear that the transfiguration took place during the night season. Jesus went to pray, and the three disciples fell asleep. The same three were with him afterwards in the garden, and fell asleep while he prayed *there*. The transfiguration seems to have been a visible, external emanation, from the person of Jesus, of the glory that dwelt within him, and probably was preparatory to his death, for they spake of 'the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.' Moses and Elias appeared to do homage to him as the great prophet and lawgiver, from whom they received and to whom they surrendered their commission. They 'appeared in glory,' and thus would encourage and cheer the disciples in the trials that awaited them.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. What a glorious event is the death of Christ! We desire to look into its wonders. Moses and Elias came from heaven to speak with him concerning it. All the redeemed glory in it as the source of their salvation, and as the masterpiece of God's wisdom and power. Let us commemorate it as often as we have opportunity, with becoming love, anxiety, and gratitude; and let the contemplation of it expel every unholy fear, and excite every holy emotion. It is Christ that died; who can condemn us? It is Christ that died; who would sin any more?

2. How great must be the glory and complete the

happiness of heaven, when a partial and transient glimpse of the glory of Christ and of two of his redeemed ones, on the mount, could have so ravished the heart of Peter, that, in the ecstasy of enjoyment he said, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here!' There are moments in which some of God's peculiar people, on earth, have a foretaste of the glory and happiness that await them in the upper world, and then it is natural enough to say, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here.' But however desirable high spiritual enjoyments may be in themselves, they are not unfrequently followed by great trials; and we should remember that the hidings of God's face may be as necessary and profitable, though not so agreeable to the soul, as would be the smiles of his countenance.

3. If the Father gave such testimony of his satisfaction in his Son, and expressed so divine a desire that we should hear him, what miserable infatuation must *they* be under, that see no beauty in his person, and that heed not the gracious words that proceed from his mouth! Let us beware of such infatuation. Sin may have its pleasures *now*, but it has *none* in death, *none* in eternity. Love to Christ may have its cross and sorrows *now*, but it has no sting at death, and occasions no pain when crowned with an eternal weight of glory.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, thou art the wonderful one. Thou art wonderful in thyself, and wonderful in all thy works and ways. Thou art specially wonderful in thy redeeming love. We would bless thee for a Saviour, and *that* Saviour every way worthy of the God that provided him, and infinitely suited to the guilt and misery of the poor objects for whom he is provided. May it be given us, on his behalf, to believe in his name, and to behold his glory. May we now so realize thy gracious presence, as that we shall have reason to say, from our sweet experience, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here.' Let us feel our hard hearts melted and enlarged by a sense of our personal interest in Jesus; and let the eyes of our minds be so opened, as that we shall behold the evil of sin, and the worthlessness of every thing worldly, in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of thy beloved Son, in whom thou hast declared thyself well-pleased. Holy Father, enable us, by thy Spirit, to accept him as our friend, by loving him; as our guide, by following him; as our Saviour, by trusting in him. Let us have pardon of sin, and peace with thee through his blood. As thou art well pleased with him, be well pleased with us for his sake. Adopt us into thy family. Give us thy Holy Spirit. Create in us clean hearts, and renew right spirits within us. Draw the desires of our souls towards thyself; and while we remain in the world, let us live near to thee, and by the faith of thy Son. Let us realize and exhibit to the world the constraining influence of his

love. O let us be dying daily to sin, and living continually to the praise of the glory of thy grace. We would confess and lament the many sins of omission and commission, whereof we have been this day guilty. We are indeed great sinners. What a mercy to know that thy Son is a great Saviour, and that, where our sin aboundeth, thy grace doth much more abound. Make us debtors to the riches of thy grace, in Christ Jesus, for pardon and eternal life. We would praise thee for the many comforts of the day. It is to thy unmerited goodness we are indebted for every comfort. We desire to be enabled to bless thee even for our troubles. It surely becometh us to bless the Lord at all times, and in all circumstances. We would bless the God that withholdeth or taketh away, as well as the God that giveth. We would love the God that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, as well as the God that shineth on our tabernacle. What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits to us? O to have hearts to love and praise thee! O to be enabled to say with Job, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' We desire to commit ourselves and all our concerns to thy holy and fatherly keeping through the night. Enable us to do it with the confidence of children. Be a wall of fire and defence around us and our dwelling. Take charge of all whom we ought to remember before thee. Upon our relatives, and well-wishers, and benefactors, we implore thy special blessing. For our enemies we implore forgiveness. Lord, increase our faith, that we may do it from the heart. The sick, and the afflicted, and the poor, and the dying, we would remember with compassion and sympathy. May their diseases be healed, and their wants supplied, and their spirits supported, and saved by the gracious Redeemer at thy right hand. We would pray for ministers at home, and missionaries abroad. May they have the spirit and presence of their Master, and labour successfully in his strength. We pray for the edification of saints and the conversion of sinners. In the seed of Abraham we feel a peculiar interest. Lord, send deliverance to Jacob. Gather the outcasts of Israel. Let them be taught by thyself that Moses and Elias have surrendered their commissions to Jesus of Nazareth. Let idolatry cease every where, and Jesus be crowned Lord of the whole earth. Now, Lord, forgive the sin of this approach unto thy presence. Prepare us for whatever thou art preparing for us. Prepare us for the solemnities of a dying hour, and for the still more awful solemnities of a judgment-day. And do all for thine own Son's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XXXII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

We yesterday morning left Jacob, after he had parted with Laban, at Mizpah, and offered sacrifice to the God of his father. We now find him on his way to Canaan, and the angels of God meeting him in a place, to which he gave the name Mahanaim (signifying two hosts or camps, or the camp of God) and which afterwards became one of the four Levitical cities within the territories of the tribe of Judah. Joshua xxi. 38.

From Mahanaim, Jacob from prudential motives and in conformity to eastern customs, sent messengers to his brother Esau, who had become prince of the neighbouring country, called Edom, from the name of its chief and proprietor, Gen. xxv. 30. This country, which was situated to the south of Judah and Moab, and extended southward to the east gulf of the Red Sea, had been given by special grant, by God, to Esau and his posterity. Gen. 24. There seems no reason to doubt, that the man that wrestled with Jacob, was the Lord Jesus Christ in human form, though not in human form in reality. He had previously appeared in human form to Abraham, Lot, and others. Having in the covenant of redemption, undertaken to become manifest in the flesh, he was pleased occasionally and before the fulness of time, to assume the appearance of a man to some of his favoured expectants; and thus to communicate to Israel some knowledge of the manner in which, as the promised Messiah, he was to accomplish the salvation of people. Jacob knew not at first, Him with whom he wrestled. He afterwards knew him to be the Lord. The customary abstinence of the children of Israel from eating of the sinew which shrank, is a remarkable illustration and proof of the truth of the same record in the case of Jacob.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. We cannot expect a vision of angels, neither have we any right to look for dreams to direct us in our difficulties. But still the angels of God are about us as ministering spirits; and we have the Bible, which is a more sure guide than dream visions, to be a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths.

2. We have here a combination of the prayer, watchfulness, and prudential diligence in business, that becometh a Christian. Jacob, in distress, went to pray. He then prudently exercised the reason and power which God had given him to protect himself and his property. And his vigilance is very remarkable.

3. We have an exemplification of God's gracious dealing, with his own spiritually exercised people. And thus does God, by his providence, or by a more than ordinary supply of his Spirit, refresh his people when they are weary, or strengthen them when they are weak, or give them such a sense of his love, as will elevate them to such a manifestation of his glory, as will elevate

above every slavish fear, and enable them, feeble as they be in themselves, to stand in the evil day.

4. See the benefit of secret retirement with God. It was during the watches of the night, and while alone in the wilderness, that the angel of the covenant wrestled with Jacob. The gates of Zion are good, and God loveth them. But that man has reason to suspect his Christianity, who delights not in retirement from the world that he may enjoy fellowship with Jesus.

5. See how wonderfully God makes our very fears and dangers work for our good. It was Jacob's trouble and fear on account of Esau, that occasioned the visions at Mahanaim and Peniel. Why should we then welcome the trouble that gives God an opportunity of manifesting the riches of his grace, and the might of his arm in our behalf?

6. Do we know the God of Jacob as our own God? Have we had any meetings with him? Are we, or any of us, an Israel? In our several duties and trials this day, let us depend on the help of the God of Jacob, and be enabled to exercise the faith, by which we shall be made more than conquerors through him that loved us.

PRAYER.

O thou holy One of Israel, graciously condescend to look on us now in the face of thine Incarnate Son. We would bless thee for *him*, and for all the privileges we receive for his sake. We would bless thee for thy holy word, and for the portion of it, wherewith we have been favoured. Give us thy holy Spirit, that he may enable us to accept Jesus, as he is freely and fully offered; and that he may beget in our souls a holy understanding, and relish, and remembrance of thy word. We would admire and adore that God who sent his angels to meet Jacob at Mahanaim; that God who personally wrestled with him at Peniel; that God who preserved him from Esau, and who fulfilled the promise he had given at Bethel. We need direction and salvation as much as ever Jacob did. Give us what we need out of thine own riches in mercy. We deserve nothing good, but thou desirest in mercy, and art more willing to give us what we are to take. O may the Spirit of grace cleanse our iniquities, renew our wills, enlighten our minds, and fill us with thy peace. May thy angels minister unto us. May our souls be found in Christ—washed in his blood—clothed in his righteousness, and conformed to his image. May we have direction in difficulty, support under trial, strength for duty, and victory over our spiritual enemies. Of ourselves, we are weak and ignorant, prone to evil, and exposed to innumerable dangers. But united to the Lord Jesus, and exercising faith on his fullness, and strength, and sufficiency, we can do all things that thou requirest of us. Let us go

through the wilderness leaning on him, and drawing by faith out of his fulness, the supply of every want and grace to help us in every time of need. Let us be found walking with God, living near unto him, enjoying a sense of his love, and realizing a covenant interest in the God of Jacob. Preserve us from seeking our own wills and ways. Let thy glory be continually in our view; and as we are not our own, but bought with a price, let us not fail to deny ourselves, to take up the cross, and to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth: enduring, as seeing thee who art invisible, and purifying our hearts, and conversation, and conduct by faith; so that when the solemnities of death overtake us, we may be found meet for the enjoyment of that rest that remaineth to thy people.

We would thank thee for thy tender and gracious care of us through the past night, and for the health, and food, and raiment, and other mercies of the morning. We desire to remember before thee, all that are dear to us. May they be objects of thy providential care, and subjects of thy saving grace! If we have enemies, Lord, do thou forgive them, and increase our faith, that we may forgive them from the heart. Have mercy on the children of affliction. Spare useful lives. Prepare for death such as are appointed to die. Bless with thy favour, and with the reviving, and sanctifying influences of thy Spirit, the established church in our land, and every other denomination of professing Christians that desire the glory of thy name, and put their seal to the truth of thy holy word; and let the time soon come, when divisions of human contrivance shall cease, and when, as there is but one Lord, there shall be but one faith. Let thy presence be with all faithful ministers of the gospel, in public and in private; and O forbid that they should forget the account they have to render to thee of the trust committed to them. Let the seed of Jacob, scattered every where, be gathered unto Shiloh; and let the idolatry of pagans and papists be destroyed by the brightness of the coming of the Son of man.

We now desire to commit ourselves to thy holy care and keeping through the day. Let the peace of God that passeth understanding, fill, and keep our hearts and minds; and do thou perfect whatever concerneth us. Pardon the sins of this approach unto thy presence. Wash our persons and services in the blood of the Lamb, and the glory shall be ascribed to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, now and for ever. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXI.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XVIII.

REMARKS.

In this chapter we have, in a variety of ways, an inculcation of the spirit, temper, and conduct that should characterise us as Christians. We have here a sure touchstone wherewith to try the state of our hearts, and the sincerity of our profession. Let us this evening put our Christianity to the test. We are too prone to take it for granted. If, on trial, we find that we have not the spirit of Christ, let us bless God for the discovery, and go to the blood of Christ for the salvation we need. If, on the other hand, we find, on trial, that we are of the number of God's little children, let us bless him for the proof, and take the comfort that belongs to such a state. Ver. 1—5. Have we been humbled and converted? This is a question of infinite importance to each one of us. Pride and ambition are natural to us, and among men these are not unfrequently considered noble qualities. But in the sight of God they are abominable, and exclude from the kingdom of heaven. God respecteth not the proud, but he does respect the lowly. Let us not be deceived. Conversion to God, by faith in Jesus, is necessary to our salvation, and, if we be thus converted, we shall be indeed humble. Ver. 8—15. If we have the Spirit of Christ, we love and cherish his people, and are careful to avoid offending or hurting them in any manner or degree. We cannot avoid offending the people of the world, if we be faithful witnesses for Christ, and however agreeable to flesh and blood their friendship may be, it is not desirable, in a spiritual sense, for it is enmity against God. But we are bound, by every solemn and spiritual consideration, to abstain from offending the generation of God's children. It is true they may not always be in the right, and their ignorance may sometimes render them apt to take offence when no offence is intended. But the Spirit of Christ is so kind and gentle, that a Christian will readily deny himself rather than offend a weak brother. And if this be the case, what shall the end be of cruel persecutors of those for whom Christ died. It is peculiarly observable that, on the great day, men are to be judged by their conduct towards Christ's people. Ver. 16—20. How little is the instruction in these verses regarded, even by those who make the most flaming profession of Christianity! In so far as obedience to these rules is concerned, they are in a great measure a dead letter. But, whatever others do, let us obey them, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Had we the spirit of Christ, we would have respect to all his commandments. Ver. 21—35. We have here clearly and strongly inculcated the necessity of a spirit of forgiveness. The true Christian forgives much, because much is forgiven him; and the more he is made a debtor to Christ, the more readily does he forgive his brother that offendeth him. If any of us entertain malice or revenge in our hearts, towards a fellow-creature, we are not Christians. We may bear the name of Christ, but what can that avail us without the Spirit

of Christ? Now, the Spirit of Christ is a spirit of forgiveness; and it is in vain that we expect forgiveness from the heavenly Father, whom we have offended, times and ways without number, unless we forgive our offending brother. Lord, increase our faith, and then shall we forgive others, as we expect to be forgiven by Thee.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art the high and holy One, in whose presence the holy angels veil their faces and their feet with their wings; yet, high and holy as thou art, thou condescendest to dwell on earth with the man that is of a contrite and humble spirit. To the lowly in heart thou hast respect, but the proud thou beholdest afar off. We would bless thee, this evening and for ever, for what thou art in thyself, and for what thou art to us in Christ Jesus. Glory be unto that God that hath so loved us as to have sent his Son to die for us. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift, and thanks be unto him that consented to be given, and came in the name of the Lord, to seek and to save that which was lost. All of us are lost by nature. By the fall of our first parents we have become guilty, corrupt creatures. We were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. In our flesh there dwelleth no good thing. Our hearts, that were originally intended to be a temple and throne to the God that made us, have become nests of every unclean bird. They are indeed deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Our conduct is in correspondence with the state of our hearts. Lord, convert us to thyself. Create in us clean hearts, and renew right spirits within us. We have now read and heard from thy word, that except we be converted, and become as little children, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Give us thy holy Spirit, that he may quicken our souls by uniting us to Jesus. Let Christ be in us by his word and Spirit, and let us be in him by a living faith. Let us be made humble, and meek, and docile, and inoffensive, and forgiving as little children. Let us bear the image of the God that made, and of the Saviour that redeemed us. Forbid that any of us should deceive himself, or be deceived by others, with respect to his spiritual condition. All of us are too prone to be vain, and proud, and selfish, and unforgiving. Let us be brought to the cross of Christ, that in its light we may see what we are, what we have done, what we have deserved, and what grace must make us before we can see God. Let the life we henceforth live be a life of faith on the Son of God; a life of holy and uniform obedience to thy law; a life of weanedness of heart from sin and the world; a life of unreserved devot-

edness to the praise of the glory of thy grace. Let us realize, in our hearts and consciences, a vital and spiritual union to Christ. Let us feel the efficacy of the atonement he hath made, and let our conduct, in the various relations of life, exhibit the power of genuine godliness. We would bless thee for the many mercies of the past day. We cannot number them all. Surely thou art to us a gracious God. We pray for the forgiveness of the many sins whereof we have been guilty. We would pray for mercy, not merely to ourselves, but to all that need it. Do thou cause thy salvation to be known and believed by all men. Let the unbelief of the Jews be ended. Give them thy Spirit, as a spirit of grace and supplication, and then they shall look to him whom they have pierced, and be saved. Put an end to the idolatry of papists and pagans, and the delusions of Mahomet. Reform and purify the Protestant churches. Unite them as one family. Bless our sovereign and all the inhabitants of our native land. May they be a holy people unto the Lord. Pity the sick and dying. Comfort all that mourn. Be the help of all that have no help in man. Let travellers, on sea or land, be under thy protection. Let widows and orphans find mercy in thee. Let our friends and well-wishers be children of thine own, and realize their adoption into thy family. Forgive all our enemies, and bless them with the spirit that will make them our friends. Watch over us through the night. May the Shepherd of Israel be our shepherd. Prepare us for all the events before us. As our days are may our strength be. Living or dying, may we be found in Christ, for all we ask is for his sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXIII.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XXXIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 3. Jacob bowed himself, according to the custom prevalent in the East, when he approached near to his brother, to mark the respect he entertained for him, and to remove from his mind all suspicion of his usurping the honour which belonged to him. Ver. 10. 'To accept a present from an inferior was a customary pledge of friendship, but returning it implied disaffection. It is the same in Eastern countries at the present day. If your present be received by your superior, he necessarily becomes your friend, and you may rely on his friendship; if it be not received, you have reason to fear. It was on this ground that Jacob was so

urgent with Esau to accept his present.' 'As though I had seen the face of God;' i. e. Jacob regarded Esau's kind reception of him as a token of the divine favour,—he saw God's presence and agency in it. Ver. 20. The altar which he built was dedicated to El-elohe-Israel, i. e. God, the God of Israel, who had delivered him from the hands of his enemies, and lately bestowed upon him a new name, even that of Israel.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

'When a man's ways,' saith Solomon, 'please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.' This was beautifully exemplified in the case of Jacob, as related in this chapter. He had incurred his brother's bitter hatred, and had to quit his father's house in consequence, and flee for his life. Though many years had passed away since that event took place, still he had reason to think that Esau had not forgotten it, but would embrace the opportunity now afforded of wreaking his vengeance upon him, for having deprived him of his birth-right. Accordingly, when he drew near to the place where he dwelt, and when he saw him coming with a large company of servants, he was afraid, and made preparation for a hostile attack. But the God whom he worshipped and served, and to whose guidance and protection he had committed himself and all his interests, interposed in his behalf, and soon dissipated his fears. By his unseen but powerful agency, he softened the heart of Esau, banished his resentful feelings towards his brother, and gave him favour in his sight; so that from being a bitter enemy he became a loving friend. How easily can the Almighty change the temper and disposition of any individual! The hearts of all men are in his hands, and he can turn them as he doth the rivers of waters. He can soon allay the most bitter animosities, and unite in the bonds of friendship those who have for years been living in hatred and strife. But the conduct of the patriarch plainly shows, that it is our duty to use all proper means to soften the anger of a brother, whom we may have offended, while we implore the assistance and direction of the God of Jacob. It is ours to use the means, it is his to render them effectual. We should never forget our constant dependence upon the Most High, for all the blessings, both of a temporal and spiritual kind, which we enjoy. He it is who gives us kind and loving friends, and makes our enemies to be at peace with us; therefore we ought to give him the homage of our hearts, and the unreserved obedience of our whole life.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most gracious God, we approach the footstool of thy throne this morning with grateful hearts, to make mention of thy loving-kindness and tender mercy. Thou art the author of our life, and to thee we are indebted for every blessing which sweetens life, and renders it in any measure comfortable and happy. By thee we were called into being, and thy kind providence has hitherto sustained

us. Ever since we drew the breath of life, thou hast watched over us with all the tenderness and affection of a loving parent; and amid much forgetfulness of thee, thou hast never for a single day nor a single hour been unmindful of us, but hast daily loaded us with thy benefits; so that in looking back on our past life, and reviewing all the way by which thou hast led us, we can set up our stones of remembrance, and say, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us, bless and magnify his holy name.

But alas! O Lord, we must confess, we have not requited thee as we ought; we have proved ungrateful and disobedient children; we have frequently transgressed thy laws, and violated thy holy precepts; and wert thou strict to mark our iniquities, we could not stand before thee. Have mercy upon us, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; and for the sake of thy Son, and our Saviour, be pleased, we humbly beseech thee, to blot out all our sins, to love us freely, and receive us graciously. Create in each of us a clean heart, and renew in us a right spirit, that we may henceforth live devoted to thy praise and glory. Justify us freely by thy grace, and sanctify us wholly by thy Spirit. Thou hast raised us up to see the light and enjoy the comforts of a new day; enable us to spend it in thy fear. Fit us for every duty; prepare us for every trial. May we deny ourselves to all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly. Be the God of this family, and of all our dear friends and relations; reward our benefactors and forgive our enemies. We ask all in the name of him who has taught us thus to pray, 'Our Father,' &c.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLIX.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XIX.

REMARKS.

1. *Respects the marriage covenant.* From our Lord's discourse with the Pharisees as here related, we may justly take occasion to admire and adore the wisdom and goodness of God, in having created the human species, male and female; and in having appointed such an equal proportion between them, as is at once necessary for the preservation of the human family, and admirably adapted for promoting the comfort and happiness of both. As the marriage relation ought not to be entered into rashly and inconsiderately, but in the fear of God, and with an eye to his glory, and the best interests of our immortal souls; so we are here taught,

that it is of the most sacred nature, and that nothing but the violation of the solemn contract, the infidelity of either party, can be considered a sufficient reason for its being broken up. Sin this is the case, how necessary and important for married persons to study each other's temper and disposition—cautiously to avoid every thing that might engender domestic discord; and to strive as far as possible, to promote their mutual comfort and happiness. 2. *Respects the young.* The delectable manner in which our Lord embraced the little children that were brought to him to receive his blessing, ought to encourage parents to bring their infant offspring to Jesus, and to dedicate them to his service by the sacred rite of baptism and by prayer. Though Jesus be no longer visible on earth, as he was in the days of his flesh, he is present in the church, by his Spirit; and peculiarly pleased with such an offering. He has graciously promised to bless the parent, and to bless the children; and surely the tender and affectionate regard which Christ displayed toward the young should induce them to remember their Creator in the days of their youth; and consecrate themselves to his service. 'I love them,' saith he, 'that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me.' 3. *Respects self-deception and the love of riches.* The history of this young man who came to Jesus, wishing to know what he must do to inherit eternal life, teaches us the awful danger of self-deception. A person may be free from the grosser vices: from dishonesty, drunkenness, adultery, and murder; and yet be far from the kingdom of God. The divine law is both inward and spiritual, and reaches to the thoughts and desires as well as to the outward conduct; it takes cognizance of duties neglected, as well as sins committed. A man must be able to keep it perfectly in every point, before he can expect to be justified by it. How absolutely necessary, therefore, is faith in the righteousness of the Redeemer! How dangerous the love of riches! how ruinous to our mortal souls! yet how eagerly are they coveted and sought after by persons of all ranks, as if they constituted the one thing needful to human felicity both here and hereafter. O let us never forget that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth; that a man may possess a large portion of this world's goods and not be happy; and on the other hand, a man may be poor in outward estate and enjoy a peace of mind and an inward satisfaction, to which the men of the world are altogether strangers. Should riches increase, let us not set our hearts upon them; let us use the world as not abusing it; and lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, which can neither be destroyed; and from which death cannot separate us.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, how excellent is thy name in all the earth; thou art God thyself alone, and besides thee there is none else. We adore thee as the King eternal, immortal, and invisible; the only wise, living, and true God. Thou art from everlasting to everlasting, the

yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Thou didst create all things, and thou dost continually uphold them in being. To thee we are indebted for our existence, and for the exalted rank we occupy in the scale of creation. We thank thee for having conferred upon us more wisdom than the fowls of heaven, and more understanding than the beasts of the field—for having made us intelligent beings; and rendered us capable of knowing, loving, and serving thee: and deriving pleasure from the contemplation of thy works, with which we are surrounded. We thank thee for the comforts which, as a family, we enjoy, and for all the blessings of civilized and social life. In an especial manner, we thank thee for having cast our lot in a land of gospel light and liberty; where we have been made acquainted with thy character, not only as the God of providence, but of grace: as in Jesus Christ reconciling a guilty world unto thyself, not imputing to men their trespasses. We rejoice to read in thy most blessed word, that thou hast no pleasure in the death of sinners; that with thee there is forgiveness, that thou mayest be feared, and plenteous redemption, that thou mayest be sought after. We desire, O God, to receive Jesus Christ in all his offices, as our Prophet, our Priest, and our King; and to trust in him alone for salvation. While we look to his atoning sacrifice as the ground of a sinner's justification, we desire to look to his holy life as the bright pattern for our obedience. O grant us the gift of the Holy Ghost, to enable us to imitate his pure and spotless example. May the same mind be in us which was in him. May we ever strive to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thee our God. Enable us to discharge aright all the relative duties of life; and thus manifest that we are indeed the disciples of Jesus. May we set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; using this world as not abusing it.

O God, we thank thee for the mercies of the past day: for preserving us in our outgoings and incomings; and supplying all our returning wants. Watch over us during the night, and defend us from all ill; pardon our sins, and accept of us in Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRaise—PARAPHRASE II.
SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XXXV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 2. *Put away the strange gods.* Rachel had brought along with her the *teraphim* which her

father worshipped, and it was to be feared made some superstitious use of them. Jacob might suspect, that among the men servants and maid servants he brought with him out of Mesopotamia, there were some idols to which they paid homage; therefore, he asserts his authority, and insists that they should all be given up for destruction, previous to their going up to Bethel, to worship the Lord God of his fathers. Ver. 4. *The ear-rings which were in their ears.* These rings were not worn for mere ornaments as among ourselves, but for superstitious purposes: being probably considered as charms, having engraven on them the image of some heathen deity, or stamped with certain magical characters; which they regarded as efficacious in preserving those who wore them, from disease and danger.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Jehovah is the only proper object of religious adoration. The idols which the heathen worship, are no gods: they are utterly incapable of protecting their blinded votaries; but he is the true God, the living God, and the everlasting King; he gives us life, and breath, and all things; therefore, we ought to worship him; but, let us bear in mind, that he is a holy and a jealous God—of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. So that in order to worship him acceptably, we must worship him reverently and with godly fear, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed as with pure water. 'God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.' And how comforting the thought to the true Christian, that the God whom we adore is every where present, and that his throne of grace is at all times, and in all places, accessible; that wherever the devout worshipper is, there he is present to accept and to bless: whether his devotions ascend from the humble cottage, or the splendid palace. Yet while he delights in the gates of Zion, he is also to be found in the dwellings of Jacob: and he manifests himself to his people as a God of mercy and compassion. His presence gladdens their souls, and causes them to say with the patriarch at Bethel, 'this is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven.'

The Christian, so long as he sojourns on earth, must lay his account to meet with troubles and trials of various kinds: for this is not his rest, it is the scene of his conflict, the field on which he is called to fight the good fight of faith, and endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Here his enemies are both numerous and powerful; but with God on his side, he has no cause to be afraid. For greater is he that is for him, than all they who can be against him. Among the many causes of his grief, the loss of near and dear relatives is not the least. When he is called to witness the death of a beloved wife, who had been the solace and comfort of his heart for many years, and to follow to the grave the mortal remains of a venerable parent, his soul is often wrung with pain, and he weeps bitterly; but the presence of God, in the season of distress, administers relief, and calms the troubled mind. How cheering to him the hope which the gospel in-

spires; that they who die in the Lord, are immediately released from all the miseries and pains of this sinful world, and are admitted to the enjoyment of the pleasures which are at God's right hand. O let us be followers of those who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises; so that we may meet with them in that better world, where there is no separation:

^a Where death-divided friends
Shall meet to part no more.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, thou hast been the dwelling-place of thy people in all generations. Thou art the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Thou didst reveal thyself unto them, as full of mercy and compassion; thou didst protect them in the season of danger, and support them in the hour of sore temptation. Thou hast never, at any period of the world, left thyself without a witness. Our fathers trusted in thee, and were not put to shame, they found thee a present help in the time of need; and that all thy gracious promises were fulfilled in their behalf. We rejoice to believe that thou art an unchangeable God, and that thine arm is not shortened that it cannot save; neither thine ear heavy that it cannot hear. We draw near unto thee this morning, believing that thou art every where present, and the bountiful rewarder of all those who diligently seek thee. We desire to seek thee, O God, with our whole hearts; and to place ourselves under thy special guidance and protection. Whom have we in heaven, O Lord, but thee? and there is none on all the earth that our souls desire besides thee. Thou alone canst impart to us those blessings of mercy and grace, which we need; thou alone canst pardon our multiplied transgressions, and blot out our sins; thou alone canst sanctify our corrupted natures, and make us holy. Have mercy upon us miserable sinners, and for the sake of him who died for guilty men, extend unto us thy pardoning mercy, and thy sanctifying grace. Adopt us into the number of thy spiritual family, and make us partakers of the blessed privileges of thy children. Create in each of us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us; lift upon us the light of thy reconciled countenance, and uphold us by the right hand of thy righteousness.

O God, thou knowest our frame, thou rememberest that we are dust; teach us so to number our days, as to apply our hearts to heavenly wisdom. Help us daily to bear in mind that this is not our resting place; that our breath is in our nostrils, and that soon the place which now knows us, shall know us no more for ever. May we spend every day as if it were to be our last, in making preparation

for our latter end; so that when we come to die, death may to us be great gain. We bless thee, O Lord, for the mercies of the past night. We lay down on our beds, we slept in safety, and awoke in peace, and refreshed, because thou hast sustained us. Keep us in thy fear all the day long. Bless all the members of this family, as we respectively stand in need. Bless our native land. Prosper the interests of pure and undefiled religion in the midst of us. O have pity upon the sick and afflicted, and prepare the dying for their great change. All we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XI.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The grand design of the striking parable of the labourers in the vineyard, is to teach us that God is debtor to no man, but can do what he will with his own;—can distribute the blessings of his providence and grace to whom, and in what measure he sees meet; and it is the greatest presumption in us to say unto him, 'what doest thou,' or to murmur and complain at his providence, because it does not agree exactly with our ideas of right and wrong. He did no injury to the Jews, by admitting the Gentiles to an equal participation of the same religious privileges. Ver. 2. The Roman penny amounted to $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. of our money, and this seems to have been the price of a day's labour among the Jews, at the time here referred to. Ver. 9. The civil day of the Jews was divided into twelve hours, which they computed from six in the morning to six in the evening; the first hour corresponding to seven o'clock with us; the third to nine; the sixth to twelve; and the eleventh to five afternoon. Ver. 12. The Jews were ready to look on themselves with great complacency, as a people who had for many ages adhered to the worship of the true God; and, at certain periods, had suffered severe persecutions on account of it. Hence they may be said to have borne the burden and heat of the day.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

God, in the sovereignty of his wisdom and grace, has made known to us, in this distant isle of the sea, and in these latter days, the glad tidings of salvation. To us the call has been given to repent and believe the gospel; to go and work in his vineyard: let us yield obedience thereto, and be diligent in doing the work of him who called us, striving to promote his glory in our respective stations, and the best interests of our brethren around us. Now is the accepted time. Let us no longer delay the season of repentance; no longer stand idle in the market place: the day is fast spent; the night is at hand when no man can work. If we have delayed till the eleventh

hour, and are apt to imagine that our day of grace is past, let us remember that, even at that late period, the great householder invited some to go and work in his vineyard, and gave them the same wages as those who wrought the whole day, thus intimating that none need despair of mercy. So long as there is life there is hope to the very chief of sinners, and whoso believeth in Christ shall not perish but have eternal life. But let none imagine that, though the hoary headed sinner, who is brought to the knowledge of the truth at the last hour, and is plucked as a brand out of the fire, shall be saved from eternal misery, he shall have the same glorious reward as the man who has spent a long life in the service of God, and been instrumental in doing much good: no, this is contrary to the dictates of reason, and the express declaration of scripture, which saith, that the Judge, at the great day of retribution, will render to every man according to his works. Let us then be incited to be active and diligent in our Master's cause; to do all the good in our power; to be faithful in the performance of every duty; patient in the endurance of every trial; instant in season and out of season, in spreading abroad the knowledge of the Redeemer's name, and converting sinners from the evil of their ways. So that, when the evening of life shall arrive, and we are called to give an account of our stewardship, we may hear from the lips of our sovereign Master, those joyful words, 'Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the sovereign ruler of the universe. Thou didst create all things by the word of thy power, and thou dost continually uphold them in being. Thou rulest in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of this lower world, and none can stay thy hand from working, nor say unto thee, What doest thou. We bless thy name for the assurance thou hast given us in thy most holy word, that, though thou inhabitest eternity, and receivest the homage and worship of angels and arch-angels, thou condescendest to dwell with men on the earth, and thou lendest a kind and compassionate ear to the supplications of thy human family. We rejoice to contemplate thee, O God, as seated on a throne of mercy, and holding out the sceptre of peace to the returning sinner, saying, As I live I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they should return unto me and live. Thy name and memorial to all generations is the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering and slow to anger, and plenteous in redemption, and therefore we have boldness and confidence to come into thy presence, and take thy holy name into our polluted lips. We have sinned against thee, O God, and have done very wickedly. Our own

hearts condemn us for many violations of thy law, but we rejoice to think that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, and that its cleansing efficacy is freely offered to the very chief of sinners. O grant that we may have redemption through his blood, and the forgiveness of all our sins. We thank thee, O Lord, for our distinguished religious privileges. Thou hast made known to us the unsearchable riches of thy grace, and called us out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel. O give us grace to walk worthy of our high and holy calling; that it may never be to our condemnation that we are so highly favoured. Enable us to bear in mind that to whom much is given, of them much shall be required; and that it shall be more tolerable for those in the day of judgment who have never heard of the name of Christ, than it shall be for us, if we neglect this great salvation. May we be active in doing our Master's work; diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; laying up a good foundation against the time to come. We thank thee, O Lord, for the many tokens of thy favour and friendship, vouchsafed to us during the week that is just about to close. During its progress many equally deserving have been cut down as cumberers of the ground. We are still spared, the living monuments of thy mercy. May we live devoted to thy praise and glory. O prepare us for the solemn services of an approaching sabbath. May our minds be freed from all distracting cares, and be ready to receive the engrafted seed of the word, that we may grow thereby. O thou, who never slumberest nor sleepest, watch over us during the unconscious hours of rest. Let no evil befall us, let no plague come nigh our dwelling. Sleeping or waking, living or dying, may we be thine. And to thee, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, one God, be ascribed all glory and praise, world without end. Amen:

FIFTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XVIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XVIII.

REMARKS.

This psalm is at once a record of deliverances and a thanksgiving on account of them. We have only to think of David fleeing before Saul, or when a fugitive from his capital, during the unnatural rebellion of Absalom, in order to form an idea of the circumstances in which it might have been written.

If applied to David's Son and Lord, who was also the theme of David's song, we can be at no loss, in the variety of his humiliations and sufferings, to discover a parallel to the lively pictures of calamity and distress which the psalm presents to our mind. Never sorrow was like unto his sorrow, in the day when his Father's hand was laid upon him, when 'floods of ungodly men compassed him about;' when 'the snares of death prevented him,' and anguish, from a deep invisible source, drew from him a bloody sweat, and mysterious cries and tears. But when his soul was in its deepest exercise; when his horizon was wrapt in darkness; and when the frown on his Father's countenance 'dried up his strength like a potsherd, and melted his heart within him like wax;' even then the holy sufferer rested on the knowledge of his Father's plans, rejoiced in the assurance of his Father's unfailing love, and dwelt with ineffable delight on the prospect of the sons and daughters who were to form his spiritual seed, and whose glory was to reward the travail of his soul. Nor was he left alone when the hour and power of darkness were at their height. Voices from the excellent glory proclaimed him the beloved Son of the Father on some of those occasions, when, to judge from appearances, he seemed most helpless and deserted. An angel descended to strengthen him when he was in an agony. And even the cross, where he was numbered with transgressors, and lifted up between heaven and earth, as if unworthy of a place in either, formed the sublime eminence where, in the view of a wondering universe, he spoiled principalities and powers, and whence his eye contemplated the fruits of a victory which shall be commemorated by the endless thanksgivings of the whole family of the redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. 'Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people: thou hast made me the head of the heathen. It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me. Great deliverance giveth he to his King.'

If we regard the psalm in its application to ourselves, how often must the Christian have occasion to acknowledge that 'his extremity' has proved to be 'God's opportunity;' that, when in his distress he called upon the Lord, and cried unto his God, the Lord heard his voice out of his temple, and the cry came before him into his ear! However barren of remarkable incidents or striking alternations of feelings a Christian's experience may have been, his memory must retain many traces of those silent but decisive interpositions which speak a language to the heart not to be misunderstood; which delightfully remind him of covenant love and evangelical promises; which rebuke his want of faith, and stimulate his sluggish gratitude; and which form, in all time coming, a record of divine faithfulness, within the sphere of his own recollection, to which he has only to revert, in order to become superior to distrust and fear when thrown into similar situations of danger or suffering. Looking back to these personal memorials of divine watchfulness and love, he will often find the psalmist's language rising to his lips, 'I will love thee, O Lord, my strength;' and will delight in the copious enumeration of attributes and

names by which the psalmist celebrates his sense of the gracious relations in which God has appeared in his behalf, as the fittest expression of his own gratitude and thanksgiving. From the history of the past he will draw encouragement for the future, and will feel assured that he has only to call upon the Lord, whom he has found so worthy to be praised, in order to be saved from his enemies. In this spirit he will peruse, and meditate upon, this psalm, borrowing its images as descriptive of his own experience; adopting its ascriptions as the terms of his own thanksgivings; warming his own cold gratitude by the inspired ardour of its praises and acknowledgments; and combining, in his application of its elevated strains to himself, that higher reference which it bears to him who is the spiritual David, the Anointed of God, the King of Zion, through whom, and for whose sake, all that he has to bless God for, of temporal or spiritual good, has been graciously vouchsafed.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou hast been the dwelling-place of thy people in all generations; a very present help in every time of trouble. We adore and bless thee as our rock, and our fortress, and our deliverer; our God, and our strength, in whom we will trust. We thank thee for all thy past goodness, and for the abundant encouragement which thy frequent interpositions in our behalf afford us to confide in thy future care and mercy. Thou hast been our stay in the day of our calamity. How often hast thou enlightened our darkness; shielded us from danger; girded us with strength to combat with temptation; and made the way of safety and of duty plain before us? O Lord, thy way is perfect: thy word is tried: thou art a buckler to all them that trust in thee. Impressed with a sense of thy goodness, we would now humbly and gratefully devote our lives to thy service. Who is God, save the Lord? or a rock, save our God? Other lords, in time past, may have claimed and received the homage of our hearts; but henceforward we will love thee, O Lord, our strength: we will be called by thy name, O our God, who alone art worthy to be praised. Not only art thou entitled to our affection and obedience, as our Creator and benefactor, thou hast redeemed us from the snares of death and the sorrows of hell, and not spared thine own Son, but delivered him up that he might save us from our enemies, and from the hand of them that hate us. Therefore will we give thanks unto thee, O Lord, continually, and sing praises unto thy name. Strengthen our feeble resolutions, we beseech thee. Confirm our imperfect and wavering fidelity. Teach our hands to war and our fingers to fight; and let not our goodness be as the morning cloud, or as the early dew, which passeth away. May this

acred day, and the services in which we are to engage, be sanctified for this end to our souls. May the day recall to our thoughts the dying love, the endless life, and the universal dominion of Him who is the Lord of the sabbath; who liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, and who hath promised to be with his people always in their worshipping assemblies, even unto the end of the world. May thy house and service be a foretaste of heaven; of that temple which the Lord God doth lighten, and of which the Lamb is the perpetual light; and of that pure and blissful service which unites the hearts and the harps of saints and angels in harmonious thanksgivings before the throne of God and of the Lamb, for ever and ever. Be with all thy worshipping people. Especially bless, and strengthen, and encourage thy ministering servants. Deal bountifully with the afflicted who are detained from thine ordinances. And enlarge, this day, we farther beseech thee, the empire of thy Son, by giving him everywhere the hearts of his enemies, and by making him, as thou hast promised, the head of the heathen. Hear us, O Lord, we entreat thee, and let the grace of thy Holy Spirit sanctify, and the abundance of thy mercy pardon us, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Saviour, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory everlasting. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 7.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XIX.

REMARKS.

The works of the Lord are great; sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. Varied and magnificent as are the objects of nature, it is as the works of the Lord that they possess their chief interest in the eyes of the Christian. In them he beholds the productions of his Father's hand, and reads, as in a mirror, the perfections of that character, which he has learned to love with the warm affection of a son. From a walk, or from a journey, he returns with a mind affected, not by the simple features of the scenes through which he has passed, but by the suggestive power of nature to bring God before his thoughts, and to exalt the charms of every landscape, by identifying it with the unseen agency that gave it being, and made it the theatre of the divine glory.

But it is not on the works of God that the Christian chiefly delights to dwell. He has another page in which his eye can trace, in brighter lines, the features of that countenance which has captivated his affections. 'The heavens declare the glory of

God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work;' but how small a portion of God would he have known, had his mind been confined to these dumb and lifeless memorials of their Maker's power! It is in the 'law,' or the revealed word of God, that he finds a 'perfect' transcript of the divine image; a 'sure testimony' to the divine character and purposes; a 'right' standard by which to form his conceptions of the divine mind and will; a 'pure' exhibition of the uncreated purity and unblemished perfection of the divine nature; a 'cleansing,' transforming fountain of living water from the throne of the divine compassion, in which his soul has but to wash in order to be clean; a 'true and righteous' reply to all the anxious inquiries which conscious guilt, and the fear of future judgment, are continually pressing upon his heavy laden and harassed conscience. The works of God are great, but the word of God is familiar and kind. In his works, God is seen obscurely, as through a cloud, and partially, as from a distance; in his word, he is beheld near, and without any darkness at all. In the one, it is his power, his wisdom, his inaccessible majesty, that strike upon our senses, in the awful forms of 'fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind fulfilling his pleasure;' in the other it is his mercy, his boundless compassion as a Father who pitieth his children, and is not willing that any of them should perish, but that they should have everlasting life, that penetrates the heart of the reader of the gospel. Nature tells us of God; but the message is accompanied by no balm to the wounded conscience, no intimation of pardon, no promise of sanctification, no hint of goodness that can reconcile the claims of offended justice with the forgiveness of sin, and the restored happiness and purity of the sinner. All this is reserved for the gospel, the revealed word or law of God. And no wonder the psalmist, turning from the stern and imperfect teaching of 'the heavens which declare the glory of God, and the firmament which showeth his handy-work,' should think with delight upon the 'perfect law of the Lord,' and multiply the forms of his love and thankfulness for it, with an untiring copiousness and variety of phrase and illustration, which show how entirely the subject had possessed itself of his heart.

Entering into his spirit, with what gratitude should we prize, with what seriousness study, with what cordiality receive, with what simplicity and decision of purpose practise and apply, the lessons of the divine word. Aware of their design to make men wise unto salvation, and no less aware of the obstacles to this design, arising out of the state of our understandings and hearts, how humbly shall we join him in the confession, 'who can understand his errors?' and how earnestly adopt his prayer, 'cleanse thou me from secret faults; keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.' It is only by his light that we can be brought to know ourselves. It is only through his grace that sin, which naturally reigns in our hearts, can be effectually overthrown, and cease to have dominion over us. It is only when, in addition to the instruction derived from the works, and ways, and word of God, we enjoy the secret, internal, and all-powerful teaching of the

divine Spirit, according to the promise of the Saviour, that we shall be 'upright and innocent from the great transgression.' Impressed with these solemn convictions, how gladly shall we plead the promise of the Saviour to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, and escape from the distressing apprehension lest our suit should be unheard, by presenting 'the words of our mouths, and the meditation of our hearts' through the infinitely acceptable mediation of him whom we have learned at once to adore as 'Lord,' and to love and trust as 'our strength and our Redeemer.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, we come before thee this evening, deeply impressed with a sense of thy presence, and with the proofs which every where surround us of thy being and perfections. Thou hast never left thyself without a witness. In our own circumstances, in our daily experience, in the events of providence, in the blessings of our lot, and in the afflictions and sorrows that try our patience and our faith, we behold the working of thy hand, and adore the indications of thy sovereign will and paternal care. Thou art never far from any of us. Thou art present not only in the world without and around us, but in our hearts and consciences. In a still small voice thou proclaimest to every one of us, that verily there is a God that judgeth; that we are the clay and thou the potter; and that we are all the work of thy hands, and the subjects of thy government. But blessed be God, we are not left to find our way to the knowledge of thy character, through the dark intimations which thy works and ways afford. Thou hast addressed us in thy word; thou hast spoken to us by thy Son. Blessed be God for the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, by whom thy character and purposes have been clearly revealed, and in whom thou art beheld, reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. This thy law, O Lord, is perfect, converting the soul: this thy testimony is sure, making wise the simple. Enable us, we entreat thee, to set our seal to every truth which thou hast been thus graciously pleased to make known to us; acknowledging it to be very right; loving it because it is pure; delighting in it because it is clean; and resting in it with confidence, because it is true and righteous altogether. May its effects correspond with its regenerating and sanctifying design. May it enlighten our darkness, cure our folly, correct our prejudices, and supply an antidote to all our errors. May it prove a source of purity to our affections, and of peace and healing to our consciences and hearts. May it furnish us with comfort when we are in trouble, direction when we are perplexed, support

when we are ready to stumble; and, when we are called to die, may it sustain us with a calm and tranquil hope. O may we prize it more than gold, yea, than much fine gold, and experience its consolations to be sweeter than honey, and the honey comb. And for the attainment of these ends, be pleased to accompany the reading and hearing of thy word with the effectual teaching of thy holy Spirit. May its sacred lessons, to which we have this day listened, be imprinted upon our memories, and written by the finger of God upon the fleshy tables of our hearts. May it be in us as a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life; supplying us with principles and motives, rules and admonitions, consolations and encouragements, suited to our respective characters and dispositions, and to the various temptations, relations, and circumstances in which any of us may be placed. May it teach us the knowledge of ourselves and of our errors; be sanctified as the instrument of cleansing us from secret faults, and of restraining us from presumptuous sins: may we be delivered by it from every evil thought and work, and be preserved unto thy heavenly kingdom, upright and innocent from the great transgression. These, our prayers, are now before thee. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts,—let our supplications for ourselves, for our friends, for the church of Christ, and for our brethren of mankind, which we now present to thee through Jesus Christ, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XXXVII.

REMARKS.

After long wandering, and many hardships in Mesopotamia, Jacob had returned to the land of Canaan. Like Abraham and Isaac, the heirs with him of the same promise, he sojourned in that land, bound to it by a stronger tie than the instinct that unites the heart of man to the soil of his birth, and the scenes of his childhood. 'By faith,' we are elsewhere told, he pitched his tabernacle in the land where his father was a stranger, 'not receiving the promises, but only seeing them afar off; but persuaded of them, and having embraced them, he confessed himself a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth.'

God had blessed him with a numerous offspring; and in them the eye of the patriarch might trace the dawning accomplishment of the great promise that had sustained the faith and hope of his fathers.

Clouds, however, were not wanting in his sky. Discord, envy, jealousy, found their way into his dwelling, and, with other passions, which his example and authority were insufficient to repress, soon began to prey upon the peace of his family. Nor was the venerable patriarch himself wholly free from blame, in the progress of these disorders. To love one member of a family more than the rest, may be nothing more than an acknowledgment due to superior merit, a sentiment not less natural and proper in a parent than in any one else. But for groundless partiality, or even for an injudicious display of a justifiable preference, there can be no defence; and, in either case, the consequences are likely to be baneful to all parties. The love of Jacob for Joseph appears, from the narrative, to have been the weakness of age; and it was displayed in a way characteristic of a fond and doting sentiment. The result was unfavourable to Joseph; much more so to his envying brethren; and the unhappy parent, in his turn, was speedily brought to taste the poison, which his misjudging fondness had infused into the intercourse of the members of his family. In the case of Joseph, we behold a youth whose early piety and amiable temper might have justly insured him a place in the affections of his brethren, no less than in those of his father, an object of hatred and animosity to the former, and of a grave rebuke from the indulgent lips of the latter. In the conduct of his brethren we behold the fatal progress of sin, seizing occasion, on the slightest grounds, to substantiate itself into a feeling, cherishing that feeling into a deadly purpose, and embracing the first favourable opportunity to wreak its madness, by plunging into a crime at which nature, reason, humanity and conscience revolt and shudder. The behaviour of Reuben is some relief to the dark shadows of the picture, which deepens gloom as we turn to the aged heart-stricken patriarch, bowed down by grief at the sight of his child's sordid coat of many colours, and refusing to be comforted, saying, 'I will go down into the grave unto my son, mourning.'

From a scene so painful, let us turn for a moment to the restraining hand that was all the while laid, unseen, upon the principal actors; and that was so wise to bring good out of evil, and to convert the crucifixion of malignant passions into the means of preserving life, and of working out a great deliverance, essential to the truth of God, and to the prolongation of the line of the heirs of the promise. In this view, the transactions we have briefly reviewed were regarded by the generous mind of Joseph at a subsequent period. The consideration that it is not man but God who is the master of events, is the great principle of scripture, and the sheet anchor of the believer's confidence in dark and troublous times. Sin does not cease to be sin, because God restrains and overrules it; affliction does not become 'joyous' instead of 'grievous,' because, through the kindness of providence, it 'worketh the peaceable fruits of righteousness in them that are exercised thereby;' let us know and be persuaded that both are controlled and held in check by Him who is 'wise in heart and mighty in power,' and hath 'all things put under him, that he may give eternal life to as many

as obey him,' is surely enough to stay our fears of the one, and to act as a sovereign balm in allaying the smart of the other.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou hast led us and fed us all our life hitherto. Thou hast been with us in our going out and in our coming in, and all thy ways towards us have been mercy and truth. Thou art our God, and we will praise thee: thou hast been our fathers' God, and we will exalt thee. In the midst of thy benefits we would not be unmindful of the hand that bestows them; nor forget, in the abundance of temporal blessings, that we are but pilgrims and strangers upon the earth. By faith we would realize better enjoyments than any which flow in the channels of this world; and raising our hearts to thyself as our portion, and to heaven as our rest and our home, we would sojourn here as in a strange country, looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. In every relation of life, enable us to bear upon our minds the duty which we owe to thee and to one another. May we be concerned to promote thy glory, and to advance the eternal interests of our fellow-men, by our endeavours and example. May we be preserved from the weaknesses, as well as from the corruptions into which good men have at any time been betrayed. May our whole intercourse with society be conducted on the principles of the gospel of Christ, and be a copy of the meekness and wisdom, the purity and love, the firmness and the gentleness, of Him who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who was in the world but not of it; who was alive to all our affections, but divinely superior to all their infirmities and imperfections. May all in whom we are interested, share with us in the bounty of thy providence, and in the grace of thy Spirit. Preserve them from the evil that is in their own hearts and in the world. Let not the young be led astray by the error of the wicked. Let them not promise themselves impunity in the ways of sin. Let them not yield to the first motions of corruption, or look with indulgence on the early risings of passion. O let them bear in mind the precipice over which so many have been dragged, who have given way to the devices and desires of their own evil hearts; and let them tremble, lest, surrendering themselves to the indulgence of an ungoverned will, they should share the misery of those who cannot cease from sin, and who shall utterly perish in their own corruption. Sanctify the heart of man, O Lord, as well as restrain and overrule the evil that is in it. Diffuse through society the Spirit of thy Son. Mark joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, and

fruits of the Spirit spring up in the intercourse of man with man, instead of those works of the flesh, which prey upon the heart of individuals, waste the peace of families, and convert the world into a scene of distrust and discord, violence and division. May all events be directed and overruled with a view to the universal extension of the Redeemer's reign of righteousness and peace. And may the hearts of thy people, firmly settled in the belief of thy word, wait patiently, while they strive earnestly, for the accomplishment of thy promise, that the wilderness and the solitary place shall yet be glad, and that the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. All that we ask is for the sake of Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, both now and for ever. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XXI. 1—22.

REMARKS.

On ordinary occasions, when our Lord visited Jerusalem, he entered the city without courting or attracting observation. At the time to which the passage which we have now read refers, his conduct was different. With the solemnity of one whose least action was significant, and who, impressed himself, was anxious to impress others with the importance of his situation and the part he was called to act, he prepared to give to his last visit to Jerusalem something of the air of a triumphal procession, and laid his commands upon his disciples, and did what was necessary himself, with a view to this novel ceremonial. All this was done both to recall to the minds of spectators the features of the promised Messiah, as described in the writings of the prophets, and to shadow forth the kingly office which it was his prerogative to exercise even in his estate of humiliation, and the ensigns of which he would soon more fully and gloriously display, when on his resurrection from the dead, the Lord should say unto him, 'sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.'

In the midst of the procession he moved forward to Jerusalem. Who that beheld him, encompassed by applauding multitudes, and the forms of triumph, could have imagined that the reverse of the picture was full in his view; that his eye looked beyond the eager homage of the crowd, and rested on Mount Calvary and its bloody cross? Yet so it was. And it is this circumstance that lends its deepest interest to the scene, and affords an insight into the Saviour's heart, which may well touch all the springs of sympathy and affection, and adoring and wondering gratitude, in our bosoms. From love to us, he not only was willing to submit to shame and suffering,

but rejoiced to meet them. What nature most shrinks from, he advanced to encounter; and, as if the calm posture of expecting patience might seem to betoken extorted consent or reluctant acquiescence, he clothes the decision of his purpose in the garb of triumph, and hastens to die with the look and mien of a conqueror. 'For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame.' 'Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.'

In the midst of the triumphal procession our Lord was still the same that he appeared in the humble abodes of poverty, or in the midst of a crowd of suppliants for the exercise of his compassion. Zion beheld its King approach, not a blood-stained conqueror, not a gloomy tyrant, not a proud and stately monarch, who looked as if all around were made for him, and he had neither mind nor heart for any: 'Behold, thy King cometh, meek, and having salvation.' The path he travelled, the triumph he assumed, were all for sinners; and the aspect he wore bespoke the mild benignant character of his mission. Change of circumstances wrought no change in his heart. 'We beheld his glory,' said one of the companions of his life, who had treasured up the remembrance of all his looks, in all that he had done and taught, 'we beheld his glory; the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of *grace* and truth.' Can we forget, now that he has ascended to a higher seat, and all the shadows that rested on his glory, while he was on earth, have for ever fled away, that the image by which he is presented to our faith is, 'the Lamb in the midst of the throne.' In the heavens which retain him, he wears the human form, stands the fleshly representative of the fallen family of man, and presents the prayers of his struggling brethren on earth, perfumed with 'much incense,' mingled by hands on which the nails of the cross have left their perpetual print. 'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. For in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.'

When our Lord entered Jerusalem, he proceeded to the temple, and vindicated the honour of his Father's house, by expelling from it them that bought and sold within its precincts. He had signalized the commencement of his ministry by a similar act; and, in both cases, he fulfilled the language of prophecy, and gave evidence to the spectators of his righteous zeal, of the inseparable connection between the purest love for man, and the deepest sense of what is due to the honour of God. Let not the lesson be lost on us. The human heart is the divine temple. The Saviour hath approached it, in the name of the Lord, to reclaim it from satan; to cleanse it from its impurities; to beautify it with his salvation; to rekindle the long quenched fire of heaven on its altars; and to awaken in its sullen recesses the gladdening melody of prayer and praise. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock,' is his language. Let

us not trifle with the heavenly visitant. Let us not presume on his long-suffering as a pretext for indifference and delay. Let us throw open the door, and invite him to enter as 'the Lord of the temple'; and having given him admission, let us further remember that 'the temple of God is holy, which temple we are, and that if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.' It is of Jesus, the compassionate Saviour, whom we have beheld approaching Jerusalem, 'meek and lowly, and having salvation,' of whom it is written, 'the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.' 'Behold, the Lord shall come suddenly to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?'

PRAYER.

O Lord, who hast so loved the world as to send thine only begotten Son, not to condemn, but to save it, be pleased to open our ears to the joyful sound which proclaims his mission, and to open our hearts, that we may admit him to that place in our affections, which is due to him that cometh in the name of the Lord to save us. May we be profoundly affected with the great love wherewith he hath loved us; and while he stands at the door and knocks, may our hearts answer to his call, and may we hasten to lift up the gates, and to open the doors, that the King of glory may come in. Blessed God, who hast not been repelled by our guilt and the manifold disorders which prevail in our souls—the sanctuary on which thou didst impress the image of thy glory—show thyself strong, we beseech thee, for our deliverance from the corruptions which have established themselves in our hearts, and set up the throne of thy Son in the living temple which he claims as his own. Sprinkle our consciences with his most precious blood, that the deep stains of our transgressions, against thy will and commandment, may be washed out. Purify our affections by the sanctifying influences of thy Holy Spirit, that the desire to sin, may no longer prevail over us. Touch the springs of godly sorrow, of grateful recollection, of willing, cheerful obedience, that our soul, body, and spirit may be holiness unto the Lord, an habitation of God by the Spirit. As lively stones may we be built upon the foundation, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious; and, as we build up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, may we offer up continually spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. And thou hast permitted us to pray, not only for ourselves, but also for others, be pleased, we beseech thee, to open the hearts of our brethren of

mankind to the love, and faith, and obedience of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Thy Son hath come into the world; let it not always be true that the world knoweth him not: he hath come unto his own; let not his own for ever persist in receiving him not. Multiply the number of those who, in meekness, humility, and love, receive him, and to whom he gives power to become the sons of God. May our friends and kindred, our acquaintance and neighbours, joyfully hearken to his voice. May thine ancient people behold in him the promised representative of their father David. And may the time be hastened, when men everywhere shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed. Now, blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things: and blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXX. 1.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XXXIX.

REMARKS.

We here behold Joseph suddenly raised, by the special interposition of the Almighty, from the condition of a youth cast away by his brethren, and sold for a slave, with no apparent hope of release, into one of trust, power, and honour. 'And the Lord was with Joseph:' What, then, though all else were against him? Greater is He that is for him. He maketh the cup of sorrow, the cup of blessing. The Lord with him, the portion of his inheritance and his cup, what though the 'archers sorely grieved him,' and a cup of bitterness had been mingled for him, God gave the youth wisdom and grace, and he found favour with God and man. 'And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man.' God is the father of the fatherless, and the friend of the oppressed. Let 'integrity and truth preserve' the young in setting out in life and struggling with its difficulties, and as God was with Joseph, so will he be with them. Joseph; by his piety, resignation, and fidelity, combined with the fact that the Lord made all that he did to prosper, would teach this Egyptian to fear the God whom he served. Let servants and youths, brought into the house and employment of strangers, even though irreligious, be faithful to their God, and blessing will come in the end. The irreligious man will himself learn their value. And let godless persons be taught how much of their comfort, prosperity, and safety depend on those that fear God. Let not the righteous, even when humble and despised, imagine they are of no use in the earth. For one Joseph, God blessed the house of Potiphar, nay, all the land of Egypt. God here fulfils his promise to Abraham, by blessing Joseph.

and making him a blessing. He was enabled to resist the temptation to which his prosperity exposed him, from the wickedness of his infamous mistress, by calling to mind the presence of an all-seeing God : but yet he did not escape the sufferings brought upon him by her revengeful spirit. Such is the dark and lothesome character of guilt, that instead of admiring the integrity and uprightness that have resisted its wiles, it is filled with hatred and revenge, and under the intolerable sense of self-degradation, would destroy the innocence that is a standing rebuke of its own guilt. By her falsehood and revenge, Joseph is cast into prison. What profit is there, some may say, in being righteous, seeing that wickedness prospers and piety is oppressed? Wait patiently and see the end of the Lord. Even though the grave should close in sorrow over the righteous, yet a day shall come when God will 'bring forth his judgment as the light, and his righteousness as the noon-day.' So was it with Joseph. The fear of God and fidelity to his master brought him to the dungeon for a time, but the Lord made it the way to honour, to the rule of a great kingdom, and the preservation of Israel. Learn from this, submission to the will of God, and patience in the way of duty. 'Consider him,' of whom Joseph was a type, 'who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.'

God did not forsake his young servant. There would be that in his character and bearing which would declare his innocence, and the heart of the stern keeper of the prison was turned to him. All this, however, was the doing of the Lord—'because the Lord was with him, and that which he did the Lord made it to prosper.' Learn hence to acknowledge God. Rather choose a prison and death, than the pleasures of sin for a season, and the issue will be favour, even life for evermore.

PRAYER.

O God, who reignest over all, and whose eyes are over the righteous, and his ears open unto their cry, we now draw near unto thee, as the dwelling-place of thy people in all generations, their refuge and their rock, whose name is a high tower, into which the righteous runneth and is safe. We delight to contemplate thee as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; as his God and our God, his Father and our Father. What are we or our father's house, that it should be so with us? Behold, O God, we are vile: what shall we answer thee, O thou preserver of men? We are utterly unworthy of all the truth and all the mercy thou hast shown unto thy servants. But, Lord, it is not our worth that is the measure of thy grace, and therefore, O God, our hearts are glad. Glory be to God in the highest that thy love is everlasting; that we have been found of thee when we sought thee not. Do thou, who didst promise to be with Jacob in all places whither he went, and to keep him and bring him again in peace, who leddest Joseph

like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron, be our God and our guide even unto death. Grant unto us, we beseech thee, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, an interest in all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, which is well ordered in all things and sure. Let thine Almighty Spirit dwell in us, and lead us in the way of truth and holiness, even in the way everlasting, and bring us at last to thy tabernacles. O our heavenly Father, do thou, who didst preserve thy young servant from violent death and the snare of the wicked one, who didst deliver him from anguish and oppression, when his feet were hurt with fetters, and he was bound in affliction and iron, keep our souls from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. Keep us by thy mighty power, through faith, unto salvation. Let thy presence ever go with us. Help us to be ever with thee, to act and to endure as seeing thee who art invisible, that in the wiles and temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh, we may say, Shall we do this great thing and sin against God? Do thou, who art able to keep us from falling, preserve us without spot and blameless to the coming of the Lord Jesus. Help us to fear God, and to have no other fear; to be faithful in all our relations, that others, seeing our good works, may glorify thee, our Father in heaven. We thank thee for the rest of the past night. Guide us this day in the way that leadeth to the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Guard us from all evil. Let integrity and truth preserve us. Make thy word a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. We commend us and ours to thy mercy and care; our friends to thy favour, our enemies to thy forgiveness and blessing; and all men to thy gracious compassions. And all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXVIII. 22.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XXL 23—46.

REMARKS.

Ver. 23—26. The leaders of the Jews were ever ready to question and to cavil with our Lord, and that people seem yet, in the just judgment of God, to be the victims of this wretched spirit. They asked, as their fathers had fasted, 'for strife and debate,' not for instruction, and our Saviour repeatedly took the cunning in their own craftiness, involved them in the meshes of their own net. Christ will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax; but he will not account to the proud. Why should He? In the present case, if they had an-

stated that John's baptism was from heaven, the consequence was plain, they had no alternative but to receive him to whom John testified, saying, 'Behold the Lamb of God.' If they said 'of men,' their safety was perilled with the multitude, who held John as a prophet. They were silent. 'We cannot,' that is, 'we will not tell.' If we did, we must believe and obey. How many indulge this guilty spirit; insolently and impiously demanding authority from Christ, instead of meekly saying, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' O let us beware of this spirit. It was that which cast the angels that sinned out of heaven, and will land sinners at last in the confusion of hell. The prejudices of the multitude ran counter to those of their leaders, but it does not appear that they led them to Christ. Thus many fall short of eternal life. Ver. 28—32. In this parable our Lord reproves the Jews who professed to serve God, but did it not, and exposes the danger of all self-righteous formalists; teaching us not only that the most rebellious and worthless who do, in humble penitence, turn to God and serve him, are accepted before him, but that there is more hope of the very outcasts of the earth than of them. Watch, then, against this too common sin of self-righteousness and formality. Ver. 33—46. This magnificent parable, full of such solemn instruction as might make sinners tremble at their own iniquity, represents God's dealings with the Jewish church. The owner of the vineyard being God; the vineyard being his church, represented under the same beautiful figure, *Palm lxxx. 8.* 'Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt,' &c. It is an exact history of the way in which the Jews had requited God's wonderful mercy to their fathers, and treated those messengers he had sent unto them at sundry times and in divers manners, and how, instead of all, they crowned their awful guilt by crucifying the Son of God. How wondrous the mercy and forbearance of God! How fearful the guilt of man! Are we better than they? By nature, 'no, in no wise.' All abusers of God's mercy will be self-condemned; their character is foretold; their privileges shall be taken away, and the despisers of Christ utterly destroyed. The convictions of conscience only produce the malignity, and aggravate the condemnation, of the wicked.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, we now would bow down before thee, in the name of Christ, and humble ourselves in the dust at the thought of the impurity and rebellion of our hearts, our too frequent contempt of thy word and commandment, our self-righteousness, formality, and pride, in refusing to own the authority of him who made, preserves, and redeems us, and rejecting even the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us. O most merciful God, teach us, from the lessons and examples set forth in thy blessed word, to learn there our own character and conduct; our waywardness and guilt; and while our hearts accord in condemning the perverse obstinacy and cruel enmity of thine ancient people

to thy truth and to thy servants, and their awful guilt in crucifying the Son of God, O let us not forget that by nature we are no better than they, and that wherein we have been made to differ, we have been entirely the debtors to thy grace. Let us not be high-minded, but fear. Help us, O God, to shun their guilt, that we may not experience their fate; lest, if we reject Christ, he may reject us, and our candlestick be removed out of its place. For if God spared not the natural branches, let us take heed that he visit not us with greater condemnation. For we sin against even higher privileges and greater light. We pray, heavenly Father, that we may be led to behold, with supreme reverence and affection, 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,' and to whom all the prophets gave witness. O may we come to his rising, and rejoice in his light. May we behold him as the Sun of Righteousness, and receive and rest upon him as 'Jehovah our righteousness.' Let his blood, shed by men who knew not what they did, be applied by the Holy Spirit to our souls, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, lest, if we receive it not for pardon and sanctification, it should rest upon us to our eternal condemnation. May it purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. Let the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness. We thank thee, O God, for all the encouragement vouchsafed in thy word even to the chief of sinners, and the abundant provision made in the person, character, and work of our blessed Redeemer, for their comfort and salvation. Let us not proudly despise any, but seek their peace and salvation. We pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Let them prosper who love her. O God, have mercy upon Zion. Heal her breaches. Return, O God, and visit this vine which thine own right hand hath planted. Gather in the lost sheep of the house of Israel, with the fulness of the Gentiles, that the wilderness and the solitary place may be glad for them, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose; till the thirsty land become a pool, and the dry land springs of water; and all the ends of the earth may draw water out of the wells of salvation, and sit under the shadow of him whose name is the Branch, with great delight. We unite in thanking thee for our great and numerous privileges. Help us to improve them, remembering that to whom much is given, of them also much shall be required. We thank thee for the com-

mon bounties of thy providence. Thou hast made our cup run over, and goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our lives. Accept, in the name of Christ, our thanksgivings for the mercies of the past day. Forgive, for his sake, the sins that have marked its course; purge our hearts and consciences in that blood which cleanseth from all sin. Watch over us during the night. Let thy banner over us be love. Refresh us with needful rest. Restore us to thy service if spared to see a new day. If called hence, as we may be before its dawn, receive us, O God, to thyself. We commend ourselves, our friends, and relatives into thy hands. Bless and forgive those who may have injured us. Be gracious to the sick and distressed. Bless all in authority. May they be ministers of God for good. Prosper Zion, and build up the walls of Jerusalem, and let the glory of the Lord speedily cover the earth. Hear, and accept, and answer us, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 8.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XL.

REMARKS.

The chapter now read is rich in most beautiful lessons. Let us observe a few of them. The offices of butler and baker were of no small importance and responsibility in the establishment of an eastern monarch. It is not told why these men offended the king, it not being necessary to the history of God's providence with Joseph. They might or they might not be guilty of some crime. Such parties often do commit crimes and suffer merited punishment, and tyrants often cast off and punish their servants and favourites at their own capricious humours. Their favour is proverbially uncertain. Hence the advice of inspiration, 'Trust not in princes, nor in the sons of men, in whom there is no stay.' The incidental occurrences of this case seem of no moment in themselves, and turn up, men would say, at hazard; but such events, in the providence of God, are often connected with the condition and fate of the believer and people of God, of the church, and of the world. 'The lot is cast into the lap, but the disposal thereof is of the Lord.' Let us thence learn to trace in our condition, when the issues are evolved, the beautiful, though, for a time, concealed links in the chain of God's providence. The 'captain of the guard' was probably Potiphar, who had by this time, though he might not find it prudent to confess it, discovered the innocence of Joseph, and seen enough to teach the falsehood and guilt of his wife, and he might therefore wish to do him justice, and make so excellent a character useful. 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace

with him.' So the pious and upright shall always find it. Their character will speak for itself, and will command respect in the sphere in which they move, how humble soever they may be.

The casting of these officers into prison, and indeed all the minute events of Joseph's history, as we have perused them, might seem mere accidents, curious in themselves, but not previously designed by infinite wisdom. Yet so it was; and observe how beautifully in them all God made even the wrath of man to praise him. If any one of the incidents of Joseph's history had been otherwise than they were, the same issue had not taken place. On how many minute circumstances do the mightiest events depend, showing how necessary to the government of the world is the constant, universal, and minute superintending providence of an all-powerful, wise, and omniscient God. Indeed, events equally singular in the providence of God, and equally clearly indicating his directing hand, are daily taking place in the world and in our own history. Could we mark them, or have them traced by an inspired hand, as they affect our present and eternal condition, as they are mixed up with the church and with the government of the universe, how beautiful and wonderful would the chain appear. Let us thence learn to serve God in every thing.

God often taught by dreams, and may do so when he pleases. But let not persons from thence make their dreams and fancies the measure of God's providence. It is absurd to do so. There is nothing more divine in the vagaries of fancy during sleep, than in its reveries when we are awake. It is sinful. Because God forbade it. Those who fear God will, like Joseph, have pity on their fellow-men. They could find no interpreter of their dream. Joseph first instructs them that God alone could reveal such secrets. *Both* the men were sad, though the dream of one only was adverse. Guilt is fearful. Joseph was sold by his brethren, but *stolen* by the Ishmaelites, as they had no right to buy a human being. Joseph did not expose the guilt of his brethren for their hurt, but the same tenderness made him tell the worst to the chief baker, that he might prepare for death. It is no kindness to hide such an event. Rather tell the truth in love. How ungrateful is the human heart! The butler soon forgot Joseph; but he did not lose his reward. God made this very act turn out for Joseph's exaltation. Here let us be consoled with the thought that our Intercessor will never forget our suit. See Isaiah xlix. 14.

PRAYER.

Our Father who art in heaven, we, thy sinful and dependent children, would now come into thy presence, to offer thee the homage of our hearts, and the obedience of our lives, beseeching thine acceptance in the name of him whom thou hearest always, and in whom thou art always pleased. Thou art God alone, and besides thee there is none else. Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created at the first. Thou art the sovereign ruler and supreme disposer of all beings and of all events,

and none may say unto thee, What doest thou? Of thee, and through thee, and to thee are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever. How delightful to thy children the thought that thine eyes are in every place, and thy kingdom ruleth over all; that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground, nor a hair from our heads, without our Father. We therefore, O God, with humble confidence and love, would cast ourselves anew upon thy care, putting our trust under the shadow of thy wings. We pray that thou, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who didst so tenderly and wonderfully preserve and conduct Joseph, thy young servant, in his trials and sufferings, who didst comfort and sustain him in the anguish of his soul, and in the house of bondage, mayest sustain and guide us in this the place of our pilgrimage. Help us, O God, to be faithful in the duties to which we are called, and the trials we have to meet; to recognise thy wise and gracious hand in all that befalls us, and to be followers of them who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises. May we profit by the examples of thy holy word, seeing that whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope. Help us to draw water, for our comfort and refreshment in this wilderness, out of these wells of salvation. We especially pray that the Spirit of all grace may enable us to set the Lord Jesus Christ always before us, as the great object of our faith, revealed in the scriptures, for they are they which testify of him, as the author and finisher of it, and as our great example; the 'leader and commander of his people;' the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. Pardon and purify us by thy Spirit, in the blood of Christ. Create in us, O God, clean hearts; renew right spirits within us. While serving thee, our God, in faithfulness and truth, teach us to maintain on our spirits compassion for the sufferings of our fellow-men, remembering that we ourselves are in the body, and liable always to be 'bound with them.' We this day renew our expressions of thanksgiving for all our personal and social mercies, privileges, and blessings. Let thy goodness lead us to repentance. While thou hast restored us to the enjoyments and the duties of a new day, and art causing the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice over us, let thy presence this day go with us, and compass us with thy favour as with a shield. We commend to thy compassionate regards, all the families of the earth; our friends; all whom we love,

and in whom we are interested; bless them in time and for eternity. We pray for our enemies. Bless thy church. Extend the borders of Zion. Build up the waste places, the desolations of many generations. Pity the distressed. Comfort all mourners; and do for us exceeding abundantly, above all we can ask or think, for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XXII. 1—22.

REMARKS.

This picturesque parable is exquisitely beautiful, and solemnly instructive. Its meaning and its lessons are very obvious. The 'marriage feast' is the gospel dispensation, and its rich provision for the wants of sinners, and the honour conferred upon them by the invitation of the great Bridegroom of his church, Jesus, the Son of the king eternal. How abundant and gracious the riches of divine grace, in the perfect righteousness of Christ, the efficacy of his blood, the power of his Spirit, the treasury of his word, the wells of salvation it reveals, and the everlasting glories of heaven, all wrought out, purchased, and possessed by Jesus Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and freely offered to the chief of poor and outcast sinners. God sends his messengers to call sinners to come and share in all this fulness and riches in glory by Christ Jesus. The Jews rejected and despised them. Earthly passions and pursuits engaged the most: the rest were so actuated by the malignity of Satan as to persecute and murder the servants of this great and condescending Lord. They received that recompense that was meet. The indignant monarch, the King of kings, destroyed these murderers, burnt up their city, and scattered in ruins their polity and nation. The same Lord over all is yet rich in mercy to sinners, and issues to us the same invitations. O let us beware that we give them not the same treatment. Let us guard against a worldly spirit, the besetting sin and curse of our day, bringing ruin on its millions, and threatening desolation to our country for our contempt of Christ.

Christ will not be mocked, neither has his blood been shed in vain, nor shall his grace and mercy be lost. He will gather in the outcasts; and they who are forgiven much will love much. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The Jews rejected his free salvation: self-righteous sinners do the same. But he commanded the preachers of his gospel to go far hence to the Gentiles; those whom Israel despised. To the poor in spirit the gospel is preached, and they will hear it. His table was furnished with guests. He himself provided the wedding garment, that is, his perfect righteousness. He gives himself. They 'put on Christ.' He is made unto them wisdom, and righte-

ousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Even among those, however, who come to the marriage, there may be unworthy and contemptuous guests, as a Judas among the apostles, and false-hearted hypocrites and traitors in every age. The king, whose eyes are in every place a flame of fire, speedily detects such and will cast them out. The marriage hall was splendidly illuminated in oriental countries. The master of the feast provided a long white robe for the guests. It was insulting not to take it and put it on. So with those who dare to appear in their own righteousness, which is as filthy rags, destitute of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. They insult the grace of the Redeemer, tread under foot the Son of God, do despite to his Spirit, account his blood an unholy thing, and shall, when he comes to see the guests, to make everlastingly joyful with his presence those who truly have honoured his invitation and accepted his free bounty, and to see that there are no polluted and contemptuous intruders, be thrust into outer darkness, punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. The number of such in the professing church, alas, shall not be few, but alarmingly great. How fearful and inscrutable the thought that many shall be called, of whom a multitude are utter despisers, and others presumptuous hypocrites, and of them all 'few are chosen.' May the Lord stir up all to anxious thought and self-examination, that they receive not the grace of God in vain.

The pharisees, though they could not resist the wisdom by which our Lord spake, yet were continually attempting, with the cunning of corrupt and self-seeking hypocrites, to entangle and ensnare him. They detested, as they dreaded, his searching exposures. We have, on the one hand, from ver. 15—22, a striking instance of the ingenuity of Satan's servants, in their well-laid plot to inveigle Christ, and of his divine wisdom in breaking its meshes. They plausibly do homage to his truth and lofty fidelity, and they then frame their question in a way that must involve him either with the people, who were jealous of their national independence, or with the Herodians, who were jealous for the rights of Cesar, and, in short, with the conflicting sentiments of the various classes on this difficult subject, and their views respecting him as the Messiah. Our Lord, on the other, at once evades their snare, and rivets their obligations to be faithful to God, and submissive to the government whose authority they owned in their current coin. They were to give honour, obedience, and tribute to Cesar, but in no case to permit Cesar to interfere with their sacred and paramount duties to God, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice.

PRAYER.

O God, the Ruler of heaven and earth, the King of kings and Lord of lords, God over all, blessed for ever, we would, this evening, with hearts filled with gratitude for thine infinite grace and condescension, and awed by thy glorious majesty, render thee our unfeigned, hearty, and united thanks for thine abundant grace, the

free and rich provision made for the salvation of the chief of sinners—that every one that thirsteth, and he that hath no money—that the wretched and miserable, the poor, the blind, and the naked are encouraged and invited to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb, to eat and drink the bread and the water of life, to sup with him and he with us. Lord, we are utterly unworthy of this glorious grace. Not unto us, not unto us, but to him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, even his Father, to him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever. O Lord, preserve us from the guilt of rejecting the invitations of mercy. Deliver us from all hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word and commandments, from all worldliness and indifference of spirit; and keep us back from all presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over us. O clothe us with the Redeemer's righteousness. Renew us in the spirit of our minds. Grant unto us humble and sincere hearts; and preserve us from all formality and hypocrisy from daring to mock our Saviour, by professing to be his, and coming before him as his people come, when in truth we are deceivers and enemies. Let us be stirred up to search and try our ways; and do thou, O God, search and try us, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting. Correct us, O Lord, but with judgment, lest thou bring us to nothing. Grant, O God, we beseech thee, that at last we may be approved of our Lord, and made joyful for ever in his presence, with exceeding great joy. We thank thee for all the mercies of the past day. Lay not our sins to our charge. Come over the mountains of our provocations this day. Rectify our improper tempers, dispositions, and affections. Give us the rest and sleep of thy beloved. Should another day dawn upon us in life, let it be in the light of thy countenance; and do thou give us peace. We renew our prayers for all for whom we ought to pray, in all our relations, and in the merciful and benevolent spirit of our holy faith, and after the example of our blessed Lord; and all that we ask is for his sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 16—22.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XLI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1. God not unfrequently subjects his people to long-continued affliction; his dealings in this respect seem mysterious, but all is ordered wisely, and,

could we comprehend the plan of his procedure, the period of his people's troubles, as well as the time and manner of their deliverance out of them, would appear to us the very best. The providence of God is continually employed in superintending, directing, and controlling the affairs of men; and he makes the course of the seasons, the state of the weather, the measure of cold and heat, the abundance or scantiness of the crops, &c., the instruments of bringing about most important changes in the condition of individuals, families, and nations. Ver. 9—14. In the providence of God there is a wonderful dependence of one event upon another, so that the most minute and insignificant circumstance is often productive of consequences the most momentous, extending not only to time but to eternity. Ver. 14, 38—45. God has ever a special care for his church, and in the providence which he exercises over the world, orders all events in such a manner as to accomplish the designs either of affliction and discipline, or of prosperity and enlargement, which he has formed in her behalf. Ver. 1—25. God has an inscrutable access to the minds and hearts of men, and can present to them such ideas, and produces in them such trains of thought as he pleases. Ver. 25. Dreams, although not generally to be regarded, excepting as indicating the state of the bodily health, or the prevailing bias of the mind in its waking hours, accompanying it into the season of repose, yet may be, and have been, employed by God as vehicles for imparting important revelations to the church and to the world. Ver. 16, 38. Not only the supernatural knowledge of prophets, but the wisdom by which men are fitted for the management of public affairs, and the government of kingdoms, comes from the Spirit of God. Ver. 38, &c. The eminent talents and virtues of individual servants of God, are often of immense influence in promoting the good of the church, and in inclining the hearts of men to acknowledge God. Ver. 38—52. God frequently converts the afflictions of his servants into occasions of joy and gratitude.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

We ought believingly to acknowledge, and devoutly to observe, the particular providence of God, as extending to all events and circumstances, the smallest as well as the greatest. If we fail to do so, we detract from the perfect and glorious character of God, and withhold from him that recognition of his sovereignty and government which we owe him. Although God may appear to disappoint our hopes and protract our afflictions, let us patiently wait for him, knowing that his time is the best, and that in so doing, we honour him, maintain a serene and quiet frame of mind, and become prepared for receiving good at his hand. However mortifying to our pride it may be, we ought to confess and repent of our faults as soon as they are brought to our remembrance; and we ought especially to be deeply concerned, and to hasten to repair the evil done, if our fault have had the effect of injuring any individual, however obscure or humble. God is to be devoutly acknowledged as the giver of every excellent endowment, and the author of all that is good in ourselves or others. We must glorify him, not only by devoting

the talents we possess to the purposes for which they have been intrusted to us, but also by a distinct disowning of any credit as due to ourselves, and ascribing all the honour and praise to him. This may have a happy influence as an example, and may lead those who hitherto have been ignorant of his claims, or regardless of their obligations to him, to glorify our Father who is in heaven. Moderation and economy in the use of the bounties of providence, and a prudent foresight in making provision for ourselves and families, are quite consistent with devout reliance on the care and faithfulness of our heavenly Father, and are impressively taught by the fluctuations in the productions of the earth, and the occasionally recurring seasons of scarcity which, for good and important ends, take place under his management. We ought to be very sensible of the kindness of God in alleviating our afflictions, and in overruling them for his glory and our good. And it is very becoming to commemorate, in our families, these tokens of divine tenderness and love. We see in Joseph an example of integrity, fidelity, and diligence in the execution of the trust committed to him. Finally, let us see in Joseph an eminent type of Jesus, to whom, after humiliation and suffering, is now committed the administration of the affairs of the world; and let us apply to him that, according to our need, we may obtain largely out of his fulness, even grace for grace. No spiritual blessing can be dispensed to us but by him; and if we have not recourse to him we must perish in our destitution and misery.

PRAYER.

O thou, who art the hearer of prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. Enable us to approach thee by that new and living way which thou hast opened and consecrated by the blood of Christ. May we know, from our happy experience, that it is a good thing to draw near to God. We adore thee as the infinite and self-existent Jehovah; the omnipotent and glorious Creator; the universal and eternal Lord. Thy character is adorned with every amiable attribute; with all moral excellence. Thou art good unto all; and thy tender mercies are over all thy works. Teach us to venerate thy glorious majesty; to love and delight in thy holy and excellent perfections; and to place our confidence under the shadow of thy wings. We confess and lament our great unworthiness. We have sinned against heaven and in thy sight. We have forfeited thy favour and lost thine image; and we deserve nothing at thy hands but indignation and wrath for ever. We would take refuge in Christ, in whom thou art reconciling sinners unto thyself. Behold us in him; let thine anger be turned away from us for his sake; give us acceptance in the Beloved. Cause us to experience the sanctifying power of the truth, as it is in Jesus; and make us altogether such as thou wouldst have us to be. May thy good and holy Spirit quicken to us the means

of instruction and edification with which thou hast favoured us; and sanctify us in spirit, in soul, and in body; and make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Teach us to feel our dependence on thy bounty, and to glorify thee in receiving and in using the gifts of thy providence. We rejoice that our great High Priest has the administration of the affairs of the world; and that he who died for us orders all things according to the counsel of his will, for our education and training for heaven. Make us contented and thankful, and to set our affections on things above. We thank thee for rest and preservation during the night. Keep thy good hand around us during the day on which we have now entered. Set a guard upon our thoughts. May our meditations of thee be sweet and profitable. Preserve us from all evil, especially from sin. Supply all our need. Direct our way. Quicken and strengthen us in duty and in trial, and preserve us unto thy heavenly kingdom. Let our prayers come before thee as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as the morning sacrifice, for the sake of our great Mediator and Advocate. And to thee, O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be everlasting praise. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XVI. 8—11.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XXII. 23—46.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 24—32. That which is here called the resurrection, comprehends the whole doctrine of a separate and invisible world; a future state of rewards and punishments. This was the doctrine which was denied by the sadducees, who (see Acts xxiii. 8.) said that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit. The one doctrine is here identified in effect with the other. Ver. 31, 32. The doctrine of a future and eternal world, in which men shall live in happiness or in misery, is clearly taught in the Old Testament, particularly in Exod. iii. 6. where God calls himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and ought to have been acknowledged by every one who received, as of divine authority, the books in which it is contained. Ver. 29, 30. The future and eternal world will be of a spiritual nature in its condition, character, arrangements, and happiness. Ver. 29. Our inability to comprehend all the circumstances connected with any doctrine, or to reconcile it with our pre-conceived notions, is no valid ground of objection to its truth. It is the office of faith to credit the divine testimony, and to rely on the power, wisdom, and veracity of God, for the fulfilment of every promise and declaration which proceeds from him. Ver. 34—40. No countenance is given to any such distinction among

the commandments of the moral law, as was held by the scribes and pharisees, who thought that if they were exact and punctual in observing one or more of them, they might, without offence to God or danger to themselves, use considerable liberty with the rest. The two commandments here specified by our Lord comprehend the whole law. Ver. 37—40. There are two grand fundamental principles on which all the statutes of the divine law depend, viz. love to God, and love to our neighbour; and there can be no acceptable obedience which does not arise from these. Ver. 41—45. The Christ or Messiah is a person of transcendent dignity, whom the most glorious earthly monarch is bound to venerate and adore as his Lord, and the Lord of the universe. But he is also the son of David, descended from him by a real, although extraordinary generation. There is a wonderful and mysterious union, in the constitution of his person, of the divine and human natures, which will continue through eternity. He is thus Emmanuel, God in our nature. He is the root and the offspring of David. Ver. 46. The Jews of that day were woefully ignorant of the true meaning of the scriptures, and consequently of the divine dignity of the Messiah they professed to be waiting for.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

We ought to avoid all useless speculation respecting the truths of religion, and not to aim at being wise above what is written, and to guard against the injurious influence of gross and carnal views of divine things. How sublime is the dignity of the redeemed sinner! With what delightful confidence may we repose ourselves on Jehovah as our covenant God, and intrust to him, in Christ, all our concerns for time and for eternity! since living or dying we are his; and with similar feelings we may think of our departed friends who have died in the faith. Let us habitually remember, with reverence, esteem, and affection, the great leading principles of that holy, just, and good law, which, under every dispensation of religion, must be the rule of life and the living principle of all obedience, love to God and love to man. Let us endeavour to enlarge our views of the doctrine of Christ, as contained in the New Testament, by a careful study and comparison of the Old Testament, which testifies prophetically of him. Let us seek to form exalted ideas of the divine nature and majesty of Christ; venerate and worship him as the mighty God; commit our souls and all our interests into his hand, with entire and joyful trust; and obey and glorify him as our Lord, and the Lord of the universe. What reason have we to rejoice in the evidences which Jesus, the Son of Man, exhibited in the days of his flesh, of his perfect knowledge and comprehensive understanding of all truth, and in the divine skill with which he answered those whose aim was, not to obtain instruction, but to entangle him in his discourse! And with what confidence may we sit at the feet of him who spake as never man spake, being indeed the very wisdom of God!

PRAYER.

O thou great and glorious Jehovah, who art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, the infinite, self-existent, and eternal God, we would

come unto thee through the mediation of him in whom thou hast revealed to us thyself, thy character, and thy dispensations, and by whom alone we are permitted to approach thee. Give us the spirit of grace and supplications, and manifest thyself to us as thou dost not unto the world. We adore and thank thee that, having spoken in former times to thine ancient people by the prophets, thou hast, in these latter days, spoken to us by thy Son; that, having revealed thyself to them as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, thou hast made thyself known to us as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Enable us to regard thee, in the exercise of faith, as our covenant God, as our reconciled Father in Christ. For his sake blot out all our trespasses; speak comfortably unto us; and bless us with the hope of inheriting a glorious portion as the children of thy family. We would be joyful in the assurance thou hast given us of a never ending and inconceivably blessed life in thy presence, purchased for us by the blood of the eternal covenant. May the prospect of it sweeten our present existence, and soothe our present sorrows. May this hope, which we have in Christ, prove a powerful instrument in the hand of the Spirit of grace and holiness, to purify our souls, even as he who is the object of our faith is pure. May we learn to love thee with our whole heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and to love our neighbours with a sincere, and cordial, and ardent affection. May we delight in thy word, and esteem all thy precepts, concerning all things, to be right. May we grow in a holy and affectionate obedience to thy will, and in conformity to thy character; and be at length prepared for beholding thy face in righteousness, for walking with Jesus, for associating with angels, and for the services and enjoyments of a holy heaven. We thank thee for the privilege of hearing the voice of Jesus speaking to us in the scriptures. May what we have read of his word this evening, furnish sweet and profitable meditation to us, while we retire to rest upon our beds. May thy presence be about us during the silent watches of the night. May we, as the objects of thy love, enjoy refreshing sleep, and be kept safe under the shadow of thy wings; and, if it be thy good pleasure, may we awake in the morning and find ourselves still with thee: or, if this night should conclude our pilgrimage on earth, may we awake to find ourselves with Christ in paradise. We ask all in his name; and to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we would ascribe the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXVI. 8—14.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XLII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. We are ever entirely dependent upon God for the support of our lives, and the means of subsistence. Ver. 1—5. God may at any time, withdraw from us without any injustice, those supplies of his bounty which are needful for our comfort, or even for the continuance of our lives. Ver. 6—20. The church of God in the world is liable to trials and afflictions, and the people of God to poverty, destitution, and difficulties. God in his own time and way brings to pass, by most wonderful arrangements of his providence, every word which he hath spoken. The extraordinary, and, to human apprehension, most improbable intimation made in Joseph's dream, (compare chap. xxxvii. 5—10.) now begins to be accomplished. Ver. 7—20. In Joseph dispensing to Israel supplies of food, we see a type of Christ dispensing to his church the bread of life. High station, and offices of extensive authority, are dangerous, by bringing such as occupy them into contact with the corrupt fashions and sinful usages of the world; and so rendering them less alive to the sinfulness of these customs, and even to the guilt of positive transgressions of the law of God. Joseph swore by the life of Pharaoh, and practised dissimulation and dishonesty, towards his brethren. Ver. 21, 22. God hath placed conscience in the soul to testify against sin; and although in the time of prosperity her warnings may be disregarded, her voice is at length heard to the dismay of the sinner when distress and anxiety come upon him. Then his sin finds him out. Ver. 25—28, 35. When the conscience of the sinner is thus roused, every event to which any doubt or suspicion may be attached, aggravates his alarm. The sound of a shaken leaf chases him. Ver. 36—38. Even good men, in time of straits and trials, sometimes manifest much unbelief, in desponding and doubting the goodness and faithfulness of God, and shrinking under the apprehension of evil, from what they have good reason to consider the way of duty.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Ver. 1—5. The people of God may lawfully traffic with, and avail themselves of the resources of the world for their subsistence and benefit. We may, and ought, to render honour and respect to those who are elevated above us in rank, or who are placed in stations of authority; and practise the ordinary courtesies of society in our intercourse with it. When by the duties of our stations, or by the leading of providence, we are brought into contact with the world, we must carefully avoid conformity to it, in practices which are sinful. Dissimulation, or falsehood, can never be justified even for the most excellent ends. We are not permitted to do evil, that good may come. We ought carefully to distinguish between the virtues and the faults of great or good men; that we follow not their mistakes and failings. We may, for good reasons, see it to be

our duty to withhold from those whom we love, the expression of our sympathy and affection, for their trial and benefit: and when we have discovered the path of duty, we ought to proceed in it, in opposition even to the feelings of natural affection. We ought to attend to the very first warnings and rebukes of conscience, and consider our ways, and immediately repent and turn to God. He is ever ready to receive us and wash us in the blood of his Son; and will sanctify to us all the discipline of his holy providence. Let us commit ourselves in all our doubts and perplexities to God; constantly rely on his faithfulness and wisdom; and trust him for support, and guidance, and enlargement, in the darkest and most discouraging circumstances. Let us be ever 'traveling from our own emptiness, to the fulness that is in Christ,' and seeking new supplies of that bread which came down from heaven to be the life of our souls, and which endureth ever.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most glorious God, thou art the Author and Sovereign of universal nature. Of old didst thou lay the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. The sea is thine, for thou madest it; and thy hand formed the dry land. Thou makest grass to grow for cattle, and herbs for the use of man. The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their food in due season. We are entirely dependent upon thy bounty for our being, and for our well-being. Teach us to acknowledge thee in all our ways, and thy hand in all our comforts and enjoyments. When thou withholdest from us that which is good, or inflicteth upon us any suffering, may we devoutly acknowledge thy sovereignty and justice, and say from the heart, it is the Lord! let him do what seemeth him good! We confess, O Lord, our manifold and highly aggravated sins; that we are unworthy of the least of thy mercies; and deserve nothing at thy hand but indignation and wrath for ever. We praise and adore the unspeakable mercy which thou hast manifested in the humiliation, obedience, and sacrifice of the Lord our righteousness. We rejoice that it hath pleased thee, that all fulness of spiritual and heavenly blessings should dwell in him for the benefit, and comfort, and salvation of our poor, destitute, and perishing souls. May the Holy Ghost draw us to that store-house of good things which is laid up in Christ, and enable us to put forth the hand of faith to take of the things that belong to him, so that out of his fulness we may receive even grace for grace. May we know our spiritual need. May we hunger and thirst after righteousness. May we open our mouths wide, and be satisfied with good. Lord, increase our faith. In the season of trial may we look to that Rock which is higher than we. May thy strength be made

perfect in our weakness. May we not faint in the day of adversity. May we look out of ourselves, and find to our own sweet experience, that through Christ strengthening us, we can do all things. May we rest in the Lord. May we in patience possess our souls, and find that, in the end, those things which appeared to be most against us, were working together for good to us; for our joy and comfort here, and our perfection and glory hereafter.

We acknowledge the gracious providence which hath sustained us during the night, and brought us to the beginning of a new day. We commit ourselves to thy protection, and guidance, and favour, throughout the course of it. May all our need, temporal and spiritual, be graciously supplied according to thy glorious riches by Christ Jesus. May thy glory be this day and every day the aim, and thy holy will the rule, of our lives. And when we have finished our pilgrimage on earth, may we be received into the Canaan that is above. May our prayer come up before thee with acceptance, and may we receive an answer in grace and mercy, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XVII.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XXIII.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—3. The authority of ecclesiastical rulers is to be revered, and their ordinances are to be obeyed, when they give forth the mind of God in his word, even when their personal character is evil. Ver. 4—33. Even in a true church, the office-bearers may be so corrupt as to exhibit nothing better than empty formality, or even vain ostentation and disgusting hypocrisy in their personal conduct, and thus to be beacons, instead of examples, to the people. Ver. 6—12. While a courteous observance of the forms of society, and of the respect to which individuals of rank or authority are entitled, is not only lawful but a Christian duty, there may be such an ascription of honour and majesty to persons of distinguished talents and influence, or to those who occupy certain ecclesiastical offices, as is highly displeasing to Christ, being an invasion of his sovereign prerogatives. Of this we have many sad examples in the popish hierarchy; in the impious titles arrogated by the bishop of Rome, and in the absurd and superstitious veneration and submission rendered to the priests, by the ignorant and deluded people. Ver. 13—15. There is nothing more deplorable, nothing more destructive to the souls of men, than to be placed under the government or influence of hypocritical, avaricious, ambitious, and self-seeking teachers. They who obey and follow them shall die in their

sins. But their blood God will require of those who have held them in ignorance and error. Ver. 16—22. Oaths are not to be trifled with, but, on the contrary, ought to be deliberately and cautiously uttered, and, when once pronounced, faithfully and religiously kept. Ver. 23—28. True religion has its seat in the heart. It purifies the fountain, and the stream is thus pure also. Whereas false teachers of the pharisaical spirit, substitute external rites and ceremonies in the place of inward piety and purity; and enjoin, with much more strictness, the minutest matters of positive institution, than the essential principles of love to God, delight in his character, and reverence for his authority. By all this they make a fair and specious appearance, but they neglect and sacrifice what is truly excellent, and good, and indispensable to the real service of God. Ver. 29—33. Wheresoever the internal principles of faith, and love, and fear of God, which constitute the essence and spirit of true religion, are wanting, men may profess to disapprove of the open outbursts of sin in others, but they do in fact cherish the same enmity against God. Such persons will be tried, not by their fair exterior, but by what God, the omniscient judge, sees to be in their hearts. Ver. 34—36. It is a very heinous offence against the Redeemer, and cannot but greatly aggravate the guilt of sinners, when they not only refuse to comply with his gracious invitations to repentance, but persecute and afflict his servants. This opposition and injury he will regard as directed against himself, and he will visit those who are guilty of it with dreadful condemnation and ruin. Ver. 37—39. The tenderness and patience of the Saviour, in urging sinners to come to him and partake of the blessings of his grace, will vindicate the severity of the judgments he will inflict upon them, for their obstinate rejection of the offers of mercy. Ver. 39. Even the most awful threatenings of the Saviour are combined with, and designed to, persuade sinners to believe and embrace promises of mercy. And the heavy judgments which have been inflicted upon Israel, will be followed by a time when he will return to them, and will prepare them as a people for at length welcoming and obeying him. The terror of the Lord should persuade us; and when he visits us with affliction it ought to have the effect of drawing us to him as the only source of comfort and salvation. What a solemn and impressive warning is given in this portion of scripture, against pride and vain-glorying, ostentation and hypocrisy, self-seeking and carnal ambition! Such dispositions as these, when indulged and permitted to rule in the heart, have led men to reject and persecute Christ, and made them monuments of his just indignation.

PRAYER.

O Lord, holy and omniscient, who beholdest the inmost recesses of the soul, who triest the reins and heart, and who art of purer eyes than to look upon sin without infinite abhorrence, we beseech thee to cause the portion of thy most blessed word, which thou hast now permitted us to read and meditate on, to make a deep, and

salutary, and lasting impression upon our minds. May the solemn and alarming rebukes which proceeded from the lips of the holy Redeemer, in the days of his flesh, and which have been recorded for our warning and instruction, suitably affect our consciences. Thou knowest, and we would consider for our self-humiliation, that we are by nature no better than those whose pride and selfishness, iniquity, cruelty, and unbelief called forth the holy indignation of thy gracious and condescending Son. May thy holy Spirit savingly impress this conviction upon our hearts. May we perceive more clearly our need of thy pardoning mercy, and of the precious benefit of the prevailing mediation, and atoning death, and perfect righteousness of Christ. Forgive, in thy great compassion and kindness of thy love in him, all that thou seest in us inconsistent with thy purity, and opposed to thy will. And give us grace to understand our errors and unworthiness, and to detect and put away from us the plague of our hearts. Do thou, the God of peace, sanctify us wholly, bringing down every imagination, and every high thing which would exalt itself against the knowledge and authority of thy law, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. May our affections be spiritualized, our hearts purified, our desires elevated. May our wills be renewed more and more, until they become entirely conformed to thy will. May we yield our members instruments of righteousness unto godliness. And may our whole spirits, and souls, and bodies, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We adore and bless thee for the continued protection and bounty of thy providence; for all our personal and domestic comforts; for all our temporal blessings; for all our religious privileges; for the unspeakable gift of thy Son, who hath purchased for us all our enjoyments and all our hopes. May we have a covenant interest in the gifts of thy providence. May all things be ours, sanctified to us by the grace and Spirit of Jesus. And may we have a growing experience of those spiritual blessings which are the special provision made in the covenant for the good of thy children. We commend ourselves this night to thy care and love. O thou who keepest Israel, watch over us, and preserve us in safety, and, if it be thy holy and blessed will, bring us to see the light of a new morning. Let the light of thy countenance shine upon us; and whether we wake or sleep, may we be with thee. Graciously accept of our worship, and hear our prayers, for the sake of him whom thou hearest always. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XC. 14.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XLIII.

REMARKS.

This chapter records the second visit of the sons of Jacob to Egypt to buy corn. Simeon had been left behind, as a pledge that they would return, and bring their brother Benjamin with them. When this was told to the patriarch he was deeply affected, and expressed his determination not to allow Benjamin to accompany them. The famine however continued, the corn brought from Egypt was nearly consumed, and Jacob, as the head of a numerous household, felt that it was necessary they should again return to Egypt to procure provision. When God has a purpose to accomplish, in opposition to the fondest attachments and desires of men, he is at no loss for means. A famine is subservient to his will, as well as the visit of an angel, or characters of fire on the wall of a banquetting-room, or a flash of lightning from heaven. It is affecting to observe the struggle in the mind of Jacob. His heart was bound up in Benjamin, and he would most willingly have kept him under his own roof and eye. But want was pressing upon his household. The patriarch consented to part with him, painful as the trial was; and giving special instructions to his sons, commended them, with characteristic piety, to the mercy of almighty God. Whatever we possess, even our dearest child, is the property of the Supreme Ruler, and he has a right to take it from us in his own time and way. But when the time of trial comes, true piety is our only and sure refuge. How forcible and pathetic the conclusion of the patriarch's charge to his sons, 'If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.' These words express at once the severity of the affliction which he dreaded, and the necessity of submission under it, should it occur. Ver. 15—28. The reception which the sons of Jacob met with on their second visit, was very different from that which is recorded in the preceding chapter. Joseph ordered a dinner to be prepared, and his brethren to be taken into the house. This unexpected kindness filled them with suspicion and fear, which led them to mention to the ruler of Joseph's house the fact that they had found each man's money in the mouth of his sack. His answer allayed their fears, and strongly indicated his own piety, proving that he had profited by the example and the precepts of his master. Masters may be eminently useful by the right exercise of the influence of their station. The example of a pious master is an high privilege to those who serve under him. Joseph's servant treated his brethren with marked kindness. Simeon was brought out to them, in fulfilment of the promise which Joseph had made. Ver. 28—34. Joseph had probably been engaged till noon in the weighty affairs of government. The time was now come when his brethren were to make obeisance before him. It is said, with the inimitable simplicity which distinguishes the sacred history, that his brethren 'brought the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth.' Joseph's

dreams in Canaan were now fulfilled. Behold the other sheaves making obeisance around the upright master sheaf! Behold the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars doing homage to him who was hated of his brethren! The affectionate nature of Joseph was strikingly displayed on beholding Benjamin—he retired to his chamber and wept. He then seats them at table, and shows special affection to Benjamin. How wonderful are the providential dealings of God! The sons of Jacob are guests in the mansion of the chief ruler in Egypt. A famine has restored them to the society and love of the brother whom they had sold for a slave. The cloud of bereavement, which had darkened the home of the patriarch, is clearing away; and the little circle of his household is on the eve of being again filled up. There had been an interval of salutary trial, but already the dawn of a brighter day had arisen, with additions of splendour beyond their former experience, soon to be followed by long prospects of prosperity and peace. Believers sow in tears that they may reap in joy.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most gracious God, thou art the Ruler as well as the Creator of all things. All things are in thy hand, from the greatest to the smallest. Not a sparrow can fall to the ground without thine appointment. Thy footsteps are often in dark and stormy waters, but justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne. Though at times thou humblest thy creatures in the very dust, and barest thine arm in the infliction of overwhelming calamity, yet mercy is mingled with thy darkest judgments, and thy purposes are as kind as they are wise. Particularly towards thine own people, thy dealings are dealings of mercy and love. Thou rejoicest over them to do them good. Thou leadeest them by ways which they know not, and thus vindicatest thy claims as a sovereign. But thou art ever promoting their welfare, helping on the work of their sanctification, increasing their joys, confirming their faith, and reviving their hopes. We desire to cast in our lot with them, and to rest in safety under the shadow of thy wings. Teach us to acknowledge thy hand, from day to day, in ordinary as well as extraordinary events. Let us be concerned to be the objects of thy care and love, as our God in covenant; and from the singular array of thy providential dispensations in promoting our spiritual improvement, let us be able to derive some measure of assurance, that we are indeed of the number of thy chosen. Help us to bear in mind that growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ should be our grand and daily concern; and let us feel, that whatever furthers this should be acknowledged as good, however, for a time, painful to the body, or distressing to the mind. Weaken the ties which bind us to the things that

are seen and temporal; and, depending on thy Spirit, help us to travel on through the wilderness, earnestly seeking a better country, and striving to attain a meetness for it. Especially, O God, when we are visited by affliction, may we not only regard its season as one of very solemn duty, but be concerned to improve it as one of endearing privilege. May our afflictions impress us more deeply with our own sinfulness, lead us to form an higher estimate of the value of thy favour, and teach us to consider habitually the shortness and uncertainty of life, as well as the vanity and insignificance of the world. We thank thee for the mercies of the past night and this morning. As we have entered on a new day, we most humbly entreat thy guidance and blessing amidst its duties and cares. Remember the human race in thy great mercy. Send the truth of salvation abroad into all lands. Visit the afflicted; comfort and support under the pressure of trouble; awaken and sanctify largely by means of it. Bestow upon our kindred and friends the joy of thy salvation. Prepare us for all the events which are before us. Forgive our manifold and aggravated transgressions; and graciously hear our prayers, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM L. 1.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XXIV. 1—28.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

This passage contains a very striking and solemn prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem. Our Lord had been discoursing to the pharisees in the temple, and on leaving it his disciples called his attention to the magnificence and beauty of the building. He immediately took occasion to foretell the time when it was to be utterly and for ever destroyed. The words, 'not one stone left upon another,' intimate the completeness of the desolation foretold. At the time the prediction was uttered, there was no probability that such an event would occur. The temple still stood in its glory. Judea, though a conquered country, was under the peaceful protection of the Roman government. There were no signs of approaching war. And yet, at the distance of forty years, the prediction was literally fulfilled. Our Lord not only predicts this event, but some of the more remarkable events and changes by which it was to be preceded. Among these, there were to be wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. Accordingly we find that, previous to the siege of Jerusalem, the Roman empire was greatly agitated in various parts. Pestilences, earthquakes, and the violent death of emperors were frequent.

In addition to these particulars, our Lord foretells the severe persecutions to which his followers would be exposed, before the destruction of the holy city. This part of the prediction also was literally fulfilled.

Nothing can be conceived more terrible than the destruction of Jerusalem, as set forth in this passage. Instant flight into places of security is enjoined. Not a moment was to be lost in preparation for flight. His disciples are exhorted to pray that it might not happen in the winter, when travelling was hazardous and difficult, or on the sabbath day, when travelling was prohibited. The calamity was to be unparalleled; and so the event proved. Jerusalem was deluged with blood. The flames, in many places, were extinguished with blood. Eleven hundred thousand human beings perished in the siege, besides those who were slain in the provinces. So many were crucified that, Josephus states, they could not find 'room for crosses, nor crosses for the bodies.' Yet observe the mercy of God towards his people; for the sake of Christians the time of this fearful calamity was shortened.

As foretold in this passage, both before and during the siege many false pretenders appeared, declaring themselves to be the Messiah, and professing to work miracles. Our Lord warned his disciples against the arts of these deceivers. His language in ver. 27, has been considered as referring not merely to the destruction of Jerusalem, but to his coming to judgment. That coming will be like lightning, sudden, conspicuous, far-spread, irresistible.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us acknowledge, with gratitude, the varied and powerful evidence on which the Christian religion rests, of which prophecy forms an important part. Let us behold, in the destruction of Jerusalem, a demonstration at once of the justice and the faithfulness of God, as well as a conclusive proof of the divine authority of him who came to seek and to save us. The Jews possessed high privileges, but they abused them; and though God long and patiently suffered their wickedness and presumption, yet at last his sovereignty was displayed in the desolation of their temple, the overthrow of their metropolis, and the almost entire extinction of their name as a people. Privileges involve a responsibility proportioned to their value; and if they are undervalued and neglected, the supreme Giver will vindicate his own claims, in the infliction of appropriate punishment. Let us not forget, therefore, that to whom much is given of them much will be required; and that it is a 'fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

PRAYER.

Almighty God, thou art just and righteous, and all thy words are faithful and true. Though thy name and thy memorial, in all generations, have been the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet thou wilt by no means clear the guilty. Thou hatest sin and lovest righteousness; and thou art angry with sinners every day. It is matter of thankfulness to us, that while this

is thy character, it has pleased thee to reveal thyself as the God of patience, and to declare that judgment is thy strange work. May we not be of the number of those 'whose heart is set in them to do evil, because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily.' May the consideration of thy 'goodness lead us to repentance.' May we remember the tokens of thy displeasure against sin, exhibited for warning in ancient times. Thou didst sweep away the world of the ungodly by the great flood. Thou didst destroy with fire the cities of the plain. Thou didst send twice into captivity thy chosen but disobedient people. And at a later period, when the blood of the Lord of glory rested on them and their children, thou didst bring the destroying armies of the heathen into their land, and utterly destroy their temple and city. O teach us to learn from these events the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the importance of deliverance from its condemnation and power, and the indispensable necessity of an interest in the death of thy Son. We thank thee that salvation has been placed within our reach, and that we have been called to look unto Jesus as the 'Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.' May we cleave to him with a lively faith, and in a state of intimate and endearing union with him; may we be enabled, by thy Spirit dwelling in us, to purify ourselves, even as thou art pure. Forbid that our privileges should lull us into security, or lead us into presumption. Let them rather quicken us to serve thee. We would remember thine ancient people the Jews, whom thou hast made a by-word among all the nations of the earth. We thank thee that there is a time foretold in thy word when thou wilt gather them into one, and when thy kindness and mercy towards them will return. Hasten that happy time. Have respect unto thine ancient covenant. Let not the thick veil of unbelief continue to blind the descendants of thy friend and servant Abraham, but let the light of the glorious gospel shine into their minds. Let 'all Israel be saved, and their sins and iniquities remembered no more.' We acknowledge thy kindness during the past day, and rejoice in the near prospect of the sabbath. Remember the heathen, and cause thy saving health to be known among them. Prosper thy cause wherever it is known, and crown it with glory. Sanctify affliction. Let it be the means of rendering savingly impressive the precious truths of thy word. Show mercy to our kindred and friends, and embrace them within the bounds of thy new and better covenant. Dwell in the midst of us.

Bless all the members of this household. May those who are more advanced be strong in faith, and may the young be fervent in piety. Prepare us for the solemn duties of the sabbath. May it be a day of triumphant power in all the congregations of thy saints. Forgive our sins, and answer our prayers, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SIXTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XX. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS XX. XXI.

REMARKS.

PSALM XX. This is evidently a prayer for the king, offered by the church. It is the duty of all the members of the church to pray for those in lawful authority. The offices of kings and other rulers are appointed for important ends under providence. If rightly discharged, they contribute signally to advance the divine glory, and to promote the prosperity of religion; while it is to be carefully borne in mind, that government, in its varied forms, is the ordinance of God, an institution which he has been pleased directly to sanction, and which possesses a peculiar sacredness, in its resemblance to his own government and supremacy, as the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. Hence prayer for kings and other rulers is the subject of express injunction in the word of God. 'I exhort,' says Paul, writing to Timothy, 'that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority.'

In this psalm, the church prays for the protection and defence of the king, amidst the perils of war. His life, as identified with the privileges and prosperity of the people of God, was eminently useful, so that its preservation could not fail to prove a great public benefit. These blessings are prayed for as the gifts of God alone, and are connected with the acceptance of the king's own prayers and sacrifices, which he had offered before engaging in the undertaking that exposed him to danger. While the gratification of the king's desire is earnestly prayed for, the church declares God to be the only source of her confidence and hope. The safety and triumph of the king would, if vouchsafed, afford joy; but Jehovah alone was the bestower of the blessings; his name alone was the tower of strength.

At ver. 6. David expresses his firm belief that God will hear and save him. He knew that the prayers of the church have power with God, and that unreserved and affectionate confidence in him is the sure omen of final success. The heathen, trusting in mere means and an arm of flesh, were overwhelmed with discomfiture and shame, but the church, trusting in God, was delivered and crowned with victory.

PSALM XXI. As the preceding psalm was a prayer for the king, so this is an expression of gratitude for his deliverance and success. Here, as before, the church ascribes all the glory to God. He is the hearer of her prayers, the author of her triumphs. Some of the blessings granted are especially acknowledged, such as the establishment of the king's government, length of days, and the certainty of deliverance from all his enemies.

Though there can be no doubt that these psalms referred, in the first instance, to David, yet it is reasonable to suppose, both from the generally prophetic character of the book of psalms, and from the extraordinary force of many of the expressions made use of, that there was a prospective reference to the Saviour, of whom David was, in many respects, a striking type. The success of the Saviour, in his great undertaking, was the subject of frequent and fervent prayer to the church; and that success was of the most wonderful and glorious kind. He 'saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied.' A crown of pure gold was set upon his head, when, having risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, he sat down on the right hand of God. His 'throne is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of his kingdom.' Angels, principalities, and powers, are made subject unto him. Length of days also was bestowed upon him. David lived to a good old age, but still he died. His descendants reigned long upon his throne, but still a time came when the sceptre departed from Judah. Christ, however, is priest and king for ever. 'Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.' He rules already in the midst of his enemies; and though there be violent opposition to his cause, yet field after field will be rescued from the power of Satan, till 'all the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.' His name written on the vesture and the thigh of the Redeemer is, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.' The last enemy, the king of terrors, will be destroyed by him; and then shall that 'saying be brought to pass, Death is swallowed up in victory.'

PRAYER.

Almighty God, we ascribe all praise unto thee, to whom alone kings reign, and princes decree justice. Thou art the fountain of power, and all blessedness and honour. Thy throne is above the heavens, and angels and men, through their ranks and degrees, are subject unto thee. Thou only givest strength and victory. Without thy blessing the mightiest are weak, and the wisest are foolish. We thank thee for the protection thou hast extended towards thy church in all past times. Thou hast raised up kings and rulers to be the instruments of thy providence in protecting and delivering thy chosen people. Thou hast most graciously heard the prayers of thy people, when, with united energy, they have come up before thee in behalf of thy servants. We gratefully acknowledge these things to be

proofs of thy love for the souls of men, for salvation is thy great work, to the accomplishment of which, all events and dispensations are made subservient. May we bear in mind that salvation is a personal concern, and that our true wisdom is to secure an interest in it, in the way and by the means which thou hast been pleased to appoint. When we consider what thou hast done for thy church, and that her members are only precious in and through the work of Christ, may we be led to prize that work more highly, and to rely on it more unreservedly than we have hitherto done. O give us clear and comforting views of its wisdom and sufficiency; and enable us to wait for the testimony of thy Holy Spirit, who alone can guide us into all truth. Help us to acknowledge thee as the source of all blessing, to trust entirely to thee in all our undertakings and engagements, and to be careful to give thee the glory alike of our worldly successes, and of our spiritual attainments. We rejoice that thou didst honour Christ with such wondrous victory. We would honour and serve him as the Anointed of God, the king of Zion, and the head over all things to the church. Subdue all his enemies under him. Let the wicked, both among Jews and Gentiles, be made to lie prostrate before the glories of the cross; and let the time speedily arrive when Jesus, the Mediator, will be hailed as supreme, by the people of all lands. Bless our Sovereign and all in authority over us. May they rule for thy glory. We thank thee for the return of the sabbath. Meet with thy people in their holy assemblies. Bless the church with which we are connected. Enrich her ministers with a double portion of thy Spirit. Encourage her elders in their work and labour of love. Establish all her people in their most holy faith. Bless the congregation with which we are accustomed to worship. Let thy ministering servant, who is to proclaim to us the message of life, be strengthened for his arduous duty, and honoured with tokens of success. Let thy people receive their portion of food in due season. Let the careless be awakened, and the openly wicked reclaimed. Go with us, whom thou hast mercifully preserved during the past night, to thy house of prayer, and enable us to spend this day in thy service. Graciously hear our prayers, and pardon our sins, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXII. 23.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XXII.

REMARKS.

This is one of those psalms, which, in all its principal parts, may be justly considered as referring to the Messiah. That it had a reference to the circumstances of David, at the time it was written, is no doubt true; but the full explanation, both of its general scope, and of many of its most remarkable expressions, can only be obtained by applying it to our Lord. The words with which it commences, were uttered by the Saviour on the cross; at ver. 16. the mode of his death is foretold in the words, 'they pierced my hands and my feet;' while at ver. 18. there is a prediction of the casting of lots upon his vesture, which was literally fulfilled on the scene of his crucifixion. This psalm is one of several, which illustrate very strikingly the manner in which, under the ancient economy, the Holy Spirit carried the views of the inspired penmen beyond their own circumstances and trials, forward to those grand subjects, alike of prophecy and of type, the person and work of our Lord.

This psalm obviously divides itself into two parts. The former, extending from ver. 1—22. describes, in forcible and graphic terms, the sufferings of the Saviour; the latter, extending from ver. 22—31. describes his exaltation and victory. Nothing can be more impressive or affecting, than the description given of his sufferings. If this psalm were to be restricted to David, we would say, that numerous and varied as his afflictions were, there is a tone of exaggeration in it, not to be easily understood, as occurring in an inspired composition. But, when it is applied to our Lord, the whole becomes as intelligible as it is striking. His sufferings were unspeakably severe. They were sufferings for the sins of his people. And at last, as the close of his sufferings drew near, and as the countenance of Jehovah was hid, he exclaimed, as he hung upon the tree, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

The latter part of the psalm describes the exaltation and victory of our Lord, with their consequences. These were the result of the divine approbation of the Redeemer's work. They were necessary to the full accomplishment of that work; for intercession and the exercise of kingly power still remained as indispensable parts of it. They were also a reward conferred, for the honouring of the law, by rendering perfect obedience to it, and for the triumphant endurance of the curse in the room of his people. 'Wherefore God also,' says the apostle, referring to this very subject, 'hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.' In ver. 22. the Saviour himself speaks, as is evident from the quotation of his words, in Heb. ii. 12. and, with most endearing condescension, calls his people his brethren. The exaltation and victory of our Lord, as described in this passage, were to consist in his having a church upon earth; in his glorifying God by means of that church, as he had already done by his work of humiliation and obedience; in

the extension of his church to all nations, and to every class of sinners; and in the continuance of that church through all ages, as a monument of the Redeemer's triumph, and as a public testimony to the perfection of that righteousness, on which, as a foundation, the peace and hopes of the church exclusively rest. These are noble subjects of thanksgiving and praise; and well may they, to whose hearts they are precious, labour to extend the knowledge of them, that 'all the ends of the world may remember and turn to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations worship before him.'

PRAYER.

Almighty God, thou art the righteous Lawgiver and Sovereign of heaven and earth. We stand in awe of thy Majesty, which is unspeakably great. Thou art clothed with light, as with a garment. Thou art the holy One of Israel. Evil cannot dwell before thee, nor fools stand in thy presence. 'All thy works are holy. Thy commandment is holy, just, and good. We abase ourselves in the dust, for we have sinned against thee, and in thy sight. Though thou art great, we have not feared thy greatness, nor had respect unto thy glory. With desperate presumption we have trampled on thy law, and incurred its tremendous penalties. We are a race of sinners; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. Nor can we help ourselves. We can render no sufficient answer unto thee. To all men naturally, there is only a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation. But ever praised be thy name, that thou hast had pity upon us. When we were ready to perish, thou didst come to our deliverance. Thy voice was heard declaring, 'Deliver from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom.' We bless thee for that new and better covenant which was sealed with atoning blood, and which includes in its wise provisions, pardon even to the chief of sinners, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We adore the manifestation of thy glory in the doing and the dying of the Saviour. 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us; and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' We look back with adoring wonder and gratitude on his advent in our world: his life of sorrow, suffering, and shame; and the awful agony which preceded his death. Enable us to behold him as the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world; and, as we stand in faith at the foot of his cross, may each of us, in reliance on his infinite merit, exclaim, 'My Lord, and my God.' O that our guilt may be washed away in his blood, and our persons accepted in his righteousness; and that, as he was raised from the dead in token of the completeness of his sacri-

ce, we may be raised with him to newness of life, and animated with the hope of sharing in his glory. As thou hast exalted him to thy right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour; may we plead our cause there—reign over us as our spiritual King, and in us by his Spirit; and under his mediatorial care, may we show forth in our comfort and holiness, the unsearchable riches of thy grace. Fill us with the peace and joy of thy children, that we may rejoice continually in the righteousness of the Saviour, and may declare its perfection and beauty abroad, from day to day.

Let the time soon come, when all nations shall know Christ, and trust in him. Send forth the gospel with triumphant power; and, as thou hast given the government of all things into the hands of Christ, give him to reign in the hearts of all men. We thank thee for this sabbath-day, now drawing to its close. Bless a preached gospel throughout the world. Keep thy good hand around thy chosen; rapidly increase their number, and sanctify the influence of their holy examples. Dwell in the midst of us. Bless old and young with thy salvation. Let our souls be in health, and prosper before thee. Preserve us during the darkness of the night; and if spared to enter on a new day, enable us to walk in thy fear. May we remember, for our direction and comfort, the truths which we have this day heard. May a savour of divine things be kept alive upon our hearts; and growing in the purity and the heavenly-mindedness of the gospel, may men take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. Hear our prayers, and pardon all our sins, for the sake of our Redeemer. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM xciv: 11.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS xlii.

REMARKS.

In this chapter, Joseph continues to pursue the same line of conduct in regard to his brethren, on which, we have seen, he had already entered. It consisted of an intermixture of kindness with apparent severity, and was directed to the objects of acquiring full information as to the condition of his father and his family, recalling to his brethren's recollection the sins they had committed, humbling them under a sense of their guilt, and making trial of their affection to their father and to Benjamin. He had already found full information as to the state of his father's family, without awakening in their minds any suspicion as to who he was; but, it was

proper that they should be still more deeply humbled by still severer sufferings; and especially, that it should be tried, whether they cherished towards Benjamin, who was now their father's favourite, and who had just been peculiarly distinguished by the ruler of Egypt, those feelings of envy and jealousy which had formerly marked their conduct towards Joseph, or had escaped from the dominion of these sinful passions, and now felt towards their father and brother suitably to the relation subsisting between them. Their sense of guilt which had already been impressed upon their minds by Joseph's conduct, (xlii. 21.) must have been deepened and confirmed when they were overtaken by Joseph's steward, when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack; and when Joseph proposed to retain Benjamin as a slave. This must have been very painful to them, and though they were innocent of the particular crime here laid to their charge, they justly regarded (ver. 16.) their present affliction as a punishment for former transgressions, and acknowledged God's providence and justice in the matter.

They likewise, by their conduct in regard to Benjamin, afforded conclusive evidence that they not only regretted their sinful conduct in regard to Joseph, but were now acting under very different principles. Had they been as indifferent to their father's happiness, and as destitute of paternal affection, as when they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites, they would, on this occasion, have at once agreed to his proposal, that Benjamin should remain with him, and have returned to the land of Canaan. But, instead of this, we find that for the sake both of their father and of Benjamin, they were most desirous that their youngest brother should accompany them, and Judah, in particular, urged this upon Joseph in a speech never perhaps surpassed for its simple and affecting eloquence, and manifesting on his part the most disinterested and devoted attachment to his aged parent.

If Joseph used his cup for the purposes of divination, as seems to be implied in ver. 5. he was therein guilty of a sinful conformity to heathen superstitions, but many are of opinion, that the words 'whereby he divineth,' might be translated, 'for which he would make diligent search.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art the King eternal, immortal, and invisible. Thy dominion is an everlasting dominion, and thy kingdom ruleth over all. None can stay thy hand from working, or say unto thee, What doest thou? Thou hast the hearts of all men in thy hand, and turnest them whithersoever thou wilt. Do thou humble us under a sense of our ignorance, of our entire dependence on thee, and of our unworthiness of the least of all thy mercies. Give us a deeper and more affecting sense of thy glorious perfections, of thy constant presence with us, and of thine overruling providence. May we feel more and more deeply that we are bound to acknowledge thee in all our ways, and to set thee ever before us,

and be enabled, through thy Spirit, more fully and faithfully to discharge this duty. Do thou lead us to view every event in our life, and every circumstance in our situation, in connection with thee, the great ruler and disposer of all things, and in connection with the great purposes for which thou hast created and preserved us. Grant, O God, that all our afflictions and disappointments, whether traceable more immediately to thine own agency, or to the instrumentality of our fellow-men, may be made the means of impressing us with a deeper sense of sin's exceeding sinfulness, and of humbling us under a conviction of the manifold and aggravated violations of thy law, of which we have been guilty during all our past lives. May we be encouraged to confess our sins by the assurance that thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. There is but one Mediator between God and man. There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved, but that of Jesus only. But we rejoice in the assurance that thou hast laid the iniquities of us all upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed. Grant that we may know more of him, and of the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death, that we may attain at last to the resurrection of life. Enable us to love him, whom we have not seen, and though now we see him not, yet believing what thou hast revealed to us concerning his present power and authority, may we rejoice in him, with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. Assist us, O Lord, to discharge aright, according to thy word, the various duties resulting from the relations in which we stand to each other, and to our fellow-men. Bring us more and more under the influence of that love which is the fulfilling of the law, and grant especially that we, who are now assembled before thee, may ever love one another, out of pure hearts, fervently, as thou hast given us commandment, and may be ever ready to make sacrifices of our own ease and comfort, for the promotion of one another's welfare. Blot out, O Lord, all our sins. Guide us ever by thy counsel, preserve us from all danger and from every temptation, for all that we ask is in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, whom thou hearest always. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM L. 5.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XXIV. 29—51.

REMARKS.

At ver. 29. our Saviour seems to leave the subject of the destruction of Jerusalem, which he had described in the preceding verses, and to bring before his disciples the end of the world and the final judgment. They had inquired, ver. 3. what should be the 'sign of his coming, and of the end of the world;' and whatever ideas they might attach to the words when they put the question, our Saviour, in his answer, plainly introduced both the destruction of Jerusalem and the final judgment, and gave them information concerning these events. He did so, because they were both suggested by the words of the questions proposed to him, and because the destruction of Jerusalem, the event to which mainly, if not solely, the disciples had respect when they requested information, was well fitted to be a type or symbol of the end of the world and the final judgment. There was a close resemblance, in many respects, between them. They were both great and striking manifestations of Christ's power for the accomplishment of important purposes connected with the triumph of his cause. The one was the conclusion and winding up of the Jewish, and the other of the Christian dispensation; and both were fitted to give the same views of God's character, and the principles of his moral government, and to bear, in a similar way, upon the fates of the good and the bad respectively. It is for these reasons that the two events are, in our Saviour's answer to the questions propounded to him, so closely connected together, that it is not very easy to determine precisely what was intended to apply to the one, and what to the other. Ver. 29. seems to connect these two subjects; and may be considered as giving a comprehensive summary of what was to take place in the earth, during the interval between them, in connection with the preaching of the gospel and the extension of the church. The language is plainly figurative, but the same figures are employed in other parts of scripture, such as Isaiah xiii. 10; xxiv. 23; Ezek. xxxii. 7, 8; Acts ii. 19, 20; and Rev. vi. 12—17. This figurative language is plainly intended to describe striking and important changes or revolutions in the state of public affairs, and in the general aspect of the world. Sometimes it refers to civil, and sometimes to ecclesiastical changes; sometimes to changes which were altogether excellent and salutary, and sometimes to those which, in their immediate consequences, were pernicious or destructive, but were afterwards to be overruled for good. The sun, moon, and stars are used as symbols of dignities or authorities, either in the church or in the world. Great changes have been effected in the external aspect of the world, by the diffusion of Christianity, and greater still shall yet be produced by it. From ver. 30, 31. we learn that the consummation of all things, and the end of the world, are to be ushered in by signs in heaven and by distress on earth, and that then Christ is to appear with power and great glory, to

inflict fearful vengeance upon all his enemies, and to make all his chosen people supremely and everlastingly happy.

The disciples had asked information upon two points, viz. *the times* and *the signs* of his coming, and of the end of the world. Christ first describes the signs of these events, and then, in ver. 32. proceeds to advert to the times or seasons, but with somewhat more of caution or reserve. He states, in general, that the times were to be inferred from the signs already described, and that this process of inference was analogous to what they were accustomed to, with respect to natural appearances and ordinary affairs. Ver. 34. must refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place about forty years after our Saviour's death. Ver. 35. may be regarded as a transition from that event to the final judgment, the period of which latter event, we are told in ver. 36. is not to be made known, and forms no part of the revelation which God has been pleased to give to man.

The remainder of the chapter, from ver. 37. contains our Saviour's practical application of the truths just declared, of the ignorance in which men were to be kept of the period of the final judgment, and which is equally suitable, as pointing out the improvement to be made of our utter ignorance and uncertainty as to the time when we may be called out of this world, and have our everlasting destiny determined. Since we are every day and every hour liable to be summoned hence, how imperatively are we called upon to be ever watchful; and how careful should we be that we may never be found breaking Christ's laws, or neglecting the objects which he has enjoined us to aim at, and thereby endangering our immortal souls. How many are there who, notwithstanding all the threatenings and warnings of God's word, live as if they knew not that Jesus Christ once tabernacled upon earth, and set before men the way of life and the path of duty; that he will come again to judge them, and that they know not how soon they may be called to give in their account?

PRAYER.

O God, thou art the hearer and the answerer of prayer, and unto thee should all flesh come. Enable us to draw near unto thee, through that new and living way which Christ has opened up, that through thy Spirit helping our infirmities, we may worship thee who art a Spirit, in spirit and in truth; that with all humility we may confess our sins, and with all fervency offer up our desires, for things agreeable to thy will and needful for our salvation. We are indeed unworthy to come into thy presence, or to take thy holy name into our polluted lips. Our hearts are naturally deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. We have still a law in our members which wars against the law of our minds, and often brings us into captivity to the law of sin and of death. During this, and every other day of our past lives, we have been sinning against thee, in thought, word, and deed. It is

of thy mercies that we are not consumed, and because thy compassions fail not, that we are still in the land of the living, and in the place of hope. When there was no eye to pity us, and no hand to help us, then thine own eye pitied us, and thy right hand brought salvation. In the fulness of time thou didst send forth thy Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem us who were under the law, and thou art now, in Christ, reconciling a guilty world unto thyself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. Herein, O God, is love, not that we have loved thee, but that thou hast loved us, and given thine only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Grant, Lord, that we, beholding thee as thou art revealed in the face of thy Son, may be constrained to love thee with all our hearts, to devote ourselves to thy service, and to labour for the promotion of thy cause. While we look back to Christ's humiliation, and sufferings, and death as the only ground of our hope and confidence, and enter habitually through faith into that within the veil, whither he, as our forerunner, is for us entered, may we also be enabled to look forward to the period when he shall come a second time, without sin, unto salvation; to be admired in his saints, and held in reverence of them that believe, as well as to take vengeance on those who know him not, and obey not his gospel. Thou hast appointed a day in which thou wilt judge the world in righteousness, and in which we must all appear before thy judgment-seat, to give an account of our actions. We know not when this day may come, but thou hast told us that as death leaves us, so judgment finds us, and we are daily reminded that in the midst of life we are in death. Enable us, under the influence of these truths, impressed and applied by thy Spirit, to be ever watching and praying, lest we should enter into temptation. Make it, O Lord, the great desire of our hearts, and the object of our most fervent prayers, and strenuous exertions, that at whatever time the Lord may come, he may find us engaged in his service, exhibiting the same mind which was also in him, and walking even as he also walked. May our minds be deeply impressed with the fearful consequences of being called hence while still impenitent and unbelieving, and may the terrors of the Lord concur with a deep sense of thy redeeming mercy, in constraining us to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, and to be ever pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Hear us and answer us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXVI. 6.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XLV.

REMARKS.

This chapter contains the account of Joseph at length making himself known to his brethren, and is, in the highest degree, beautiful and interesting. He could scarcely have made himself known to them, without referring to the manner in which their intercourse had terminated when they sold him into Egypt; but knowing that this discovery would probably fill them with the apprehension that he might now take vengeance upon them, he, with great kindness and delicacy, quickly passed on to a different aspect of that transaction, viz. that it was to be regarded as God's doing, and intended by him for promoting their happiness. 'So now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God.' He did not, of course, intend by this statement to express any conviction of his own, that they had been guilty of no sin in selling him, or to lead them to think lightly of their offence; but it was the natural suggestion of kindness and affection, at a moment when they might be supposed to be deeply affected by a sense of guilt and danger, to turn their thoughts to a more pleasing aspect of that event. It was true that God had intended, in this way, to provide for the final accomplishment of his own merciful and gracious designs in regard to the family of Jacob, and that he had now overruled it for securing that end. But neither this consideration, nor any other, could affect the moral character of the transaction, as a deed done by Joseph's brethren; it could not affect their responsibility and guilt, and should not in the least have diminished their compunction. God maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and restraineth the remainder of his wrath. Even our sinful actions are comprehended in the great scheme of God's providence, and when they are reflected upon, should be viewed in connection with his agency in permitting and overruling them. They may, when we look back upon them, be regarded as being, in a certain sense, dispensations of God's providence, which we are called upon to improve, as fitted to call forth certain feelings, and to enforce certain lessons. But though this view of them may and should be taken and improved, we must carefully guard against allowing ourselves to imagine that, in consequence of God's superintending and overruling agency, our responsibility and guilt are at all diminished. Joseph's brethren had already experienced important advantages from those results which God had brought out of their sin, and had the prospect of deriving still further benefits from the same source, but this did not make their conduct, in selling their brother, less heinous; it should not have made them less humble and penitent, but should rather have contributed to make them walk softly all their days. The history of Joseph, of the conduct of his brethren towards him, and of his conduct towards them, strikingly illustrates some of the principles of God's moral government, and especially his bringing good out of evil, and overruling all events and all influences, for the fulfilment

of his predictions and the accomplishment of his designs. He sees the end from the beginning; he has the hearts of all men in his hand; he controls every influence, the most powerful and the most feeble; he is constantly providing for the accomplishment of his own designs, and in his own time and way he will fully effect them, though probably by a series of events which no human wisdom could foresee, and no human power could control. Have not all of us, when we survey the way through which God has led us, abundant ground to praise him for his great forbearance and kindness, in making not only our afflictions but even our sins instrumental in advancing his own glory and our true welfare? And should not this consideration, while it does not in the least diminish our hatred of sin, and our earnest desire to be wholly delivered from its pollution, produce more cordial resignation to his will, and lead his people to wait on him with all humility and confidence, assured that yet they shall have good reason to praise, and that all things shall be made to work together for their good.

PRAYER.

O Lord God Almighty, enable us to approach thee with profound reverence and godly fear, regarding thee as glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, and continually doing wonders, and remembering that thou knowest our very thoughts afar off, and art intimately acquainted with all our ways. There is no searching of thine understanding. We can never, at any moment or in any circumstances, depart from thy presence or flee from thy Spirit. When we contemplate thy constant presence with us, thine unlimited dominion, and thine immaculate holiness, it becomes us to be ashamed and confounded before thee. To us, indeed, belong only shame and confusion of face, because we are sinners, but with thee there is forgiveness, that thou mayest be feared, and plenteous redemption, that thou mayest be sought after. Thou hast looked upon us with compassion, in our low and lost estate. Thou didst say, Save from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom. Thou hast laid our help on one able and mighty to save. Thou hast set forth thy Son to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, and when he had by himself purged our sins, thou didst raise him up to thine own right hand, and gave him glory, that our faith and our hope might be in him. Enable us to place our sole reliance on what he has done and suffered in the room of guilty men. May we be firmly persuaded that he is able and willing to save, even unto the uttermost, all that come unto thee through him; and renouncing every other ground of hope, and abandoning, henceforward, every attempt to establish a righteousness of our own, may we rest on him alone for salvation, as he is set before us, and offered to us,

in the gospel. We would count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and desire to be willing to bear the loss of all things, that we may win him, and be found in him. May we cordially exult in the assurance, that he who once died for sins and rose again for our justification, is now seated at thy right hand, King of kings and Lord of lords, and will make all things to work together for good to them that love him. May we delight to trace thy wisdom, and forbearance, and kindness, in thy dealings with thy people in every age. And assured that thou canst easily bring good out of evil, and that they who put their trust in thee shall never be put to shame, may we become every day more resigned to thy will, and more disposed to regard with thankfulness, all the dispensations of thy providence concerning us. Uphold and comfort us by the assurance that, though clouds and darkness are sometimes round about thee, yet that justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne. May we dwell more habitually upon all thy great and precious promises, and thus be encouraged to lay aside every weight, and to run with patience the race that has been set before us, until we attain to the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls. Hear our prayers, forgive all our sins, and do for us above what we can ask or think, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXVII. 34.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XXV. 1—31.

REMARKS.

The statements contained in these verses are intended to illustrate the nature of Christ's kingdom, the principles on which its blessings are conferred and enjoyed, and the course which, in consequence, men ought to pursue, that they may ultimately share in its rewards; and the aspects in which the kingdom of heaven is here represented are powerfully fitted to deepen our sense of responsibility, and to call forth diligence and watchfulness. This illustration is conveyed by means of two parables, the parable of the ten virgins, and the parable of the talents. These two parables, like most of those delivered by our Saviour, are substantially appeals to men's natural sense of what is fair and just and reasonable. Every one must be constrained to condemn the conduct of the foolish virgins as here described, to regard it as in the highest degree imprudent and dangerous, and must be satisfied that their exclusion from the marriage feast, with all the miseries it implied, was perfectly reasonable in itself, and was the natural result of the folly which they

had chosen to manifest; their neglect to make due preparation for what might every moment occur, exposed them to inevitable exclusion; and severe as was the punishment, and inexorable as was the judge, it is plain that as they had sowed so were they now reaping, and that they were themselves alone to blame for the fate which had overtaken them. We profess, like these virgins, to have gone forth to meet the bridegroom, to be aware that he may come to us at any moment, and, without warning, settle instantly and irrevocably our eternal destiny. And, in these circumstances, it is the height of folly to let an hour pass over our heads unprepared, for that which may every moment occur, and which, if it do find us unprepared, will sink us in everlasting misery.

Both these parables are intended to impress upon us a deep sense of our responsibility for the mode in which we spend our time, exercise our faculties, and improve our opportunities. In addition to this general lesson, which both of them forcibly inculcate, the parable of the ten virgins is designed more immediately to enforce the necessity of *vigilance*; while that of the talents is intended to impress the necessity of *diligence*. No one can fail to see how strikingly the condition of men in this world, as the subjects of God's moral government, who are one day to be brought to trial for all things done in the body, is set forth in the history of the servants who received different talents from their master; and how fair and reasonable was his conduct. And if men are really placed in this situation, and if such infinitely important consequences are suspended, and that most reasonably and righteously, upon their acting suitably to their condition and obligations, should not this representation bring home to our minds, with peculiar power, the fearful danger, even of sloth and negligence, in every thing connected with God and eternity, and the necessity of living to the glory of God, and in the view of the judgment-day.

What we know of God's character and purposes, and of the relation in which we stand to him, imposes upon us an imperative obligation to do our utmost that he may be glorified, and that we and others may be saved. We can give no good excuse for not bringing forth fruit, and if we were to attempt it, we might by our own confessions and professions be covered with confusion. It was quite just and reasonable to condemn and punish the servant who had hid his talent in the earth. And it is quite sufficient that we 'have not,' *i. e.* that we have done nothing for effecting the purposes for which our talents were given us, in order to warrant and secure our condemnation, our expulsion from God's presence, and our eternal ruin.

PRAYER.

Wherewithal, O Lord, shall we come before thee, or bow ourselves before the most high God? We are sinful dust and ashes. We have been all guilty of the folly of departing from the fountain of living waters, and of hewing out to ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. We have

been spending our money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not. But thou hast no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they should turn from their ways and live. Thou hast made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Thou art now graciously inviting and beseeching us to be reconciled unto thee through Christ, and art assuring us, that them that come unto thee, thou wilt in nowise reject. We must lament that we have neglected the great salvation, and paid little regard to him who was speaking to us from heaven. We have not been duly concerned to understand the nature of Christ's kingdom, and to live like the faithful subjects of him who reigns in it. Thou hast given us all many talents, capacities, and opportunities for promoting thy glory, advancing thy cause, and securing our own true welfare. To thee we owe all our worldly substance, and all our sources of influence. Thou hast appointed the boundaries of our habitations, and determined all the events which have befallen us. Thou hast fully made known to us thy will. Thou hast imposed upon us the most powerful obligations to glorify thee in our bodies, and in our spirits, and to devote ourselves, and all that we have, to the promotion of thy purposes. And yet, O Lord, we must confess that we have forgotten thee, the God that made us, and lightly esteemed thee, the rock of our salvation. We have not spent our time, or employed our worldly substance, or exercised our faculties under a due sense of our responsibility, and for the great ends for which they were bestowed upon us. We have no excuse to offer unto thee for our neglect and disobedience. We confess our guilt and folly. We beseech thee to look upon us, not as we are in ourselves, but in the face of thine own anointed One, and for his sake, to heal all our backslidings, to receive us graciously, and to love us freely, and let our iniquity be taken away. May we become much more diligent in thy service, and much more attentive to the work which thou hast given us to do. Enable us to guard carefully against every thing that may tempt us to neglect the salvation of our souls, or to fail in the faithful and diligent improvement of all our talents. Impress us at all times with the conviction, that while we are to occupy till Christ come, we must then give an account of all things done in the body, and have our everlasting condition determined by the improvement we have made of the talents and privileges thou hast bestowed. May all that we have learned concerning thee,

and thy character, impress us with a deep sense of our obligations to be ever abounding in thy work; and do thou communicate to us such supplies of grace and strength, as that we may all at length, having finished our course and kept the faith, receive the crown of life and be admitted into the joy of our Lord. Blot out, O Lord, all our sins, supply abundantly our wants, and preserve us in safety into thy kingdom, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 1—10.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XLVII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Joseph, being a faithful servant, would best nothing on his father and brethren without Pharaoh's knowledge and consent. Being a sensible man well as an affectionate son and brother, he was ashamed of his kindred in their necessitous circumstances. Hence he informed Pharaoh of their arrival and took and presented some of them to the Egyptian monarch. Pharaoh being deeply sensible of Joseph's valuable services, received Jacob and his sons with kindness. When Jacob was brought into Pharaoh's presence, with the privilege of old age and authority of a patriarch and prophet, he blessed the king of Egypt, 'The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. And when the king, struck with his venerable appearance, asked him of his age, Jacob spoke of life as a pilgrimage, referring to his many wanderings without a fixed habitation, but more especially to world being a place of pilgrimage in relation to eternal inheritance. He spoke of the days of pilgrimage as both few and evil. They were fewer than those of Abraham and Isaac, the former whom lived 175 years, and the latter 180 years and they were evil days, that is, full of sorrows, in which Jacob was visited for his sinful deception his aged father, Isaac. Jacob and his children placed in Rameses, understood to have been a tract of the land of Goshen, were amply provided for by Joseph there. Meanwhile Joseph wisely faithfully discharged the important duty devolved upon him, of dealing out corn to the Egyptians. He does not appear to have availed himself of having bought them for bread, to reduce them to a state of personal slavery, as some have thought. And when he restored them their lands again, only stipulating that a fifth part of the produce should, in lieu of all taxes, belong to the king for ever; no hard condition, such as in a country where, by reason of the fertility of the ground, the people were thankful to hold land on condition of retaining one half of the produce. Jacob also gave them seed, a token that the famine was near an end; an intimation from a quarter that they had already found worthy of credit, that they might now sow in the assurance of an abundant increase. Jacob, finding his death approaching, desired to

buried in Canaan, in testimony of his faith in the promise of God, that his posterity should one day possess that country. And when Joseph swore to comply with his wishes, he bowed himself on his bed's head, giving thanks to God, and in token of his full satisfaction.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Nothing can be more beautiful than to see a son, whom providence has advanced in the world, honouring and cherishing an aged parent, and, with united kindness and rectitude, doing good to those relatives and friends who have been less successful in life than himself. Am I always kind to my relatives, never ashamed of them in their honest poverty, and so conducting myself as that my relatives never need to be ashamed of me? Every one should have some honest, useful employment. It is not creditable, it is even sinful, to be idle. Every hour must be accounted for. How like is our present life to a pilgrimage! How many changes do we witness and experience! Onward we move from journey to journey. How few the total sum of the days of this pilgrimage! Often how full of evils, of trials, of sorrows! But, what then? It cometh speedily to an end; and if the evils and sorrows end with it, we shall soon be quit of them. Let me live, then, let me feel, as a stranger and pilgrim here below, journeying cheerfully along, leaning on Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit, with my desires fixed on the rest that remaineth for the people of God. When in a situation of trust, let us be guided by a principle of strict integrity, not giving anything away without the permission of our employer, even as Joseph did not, at his own hand, provide for his kindred; and using all things entrusted to us to the fair advantage of those whose interests we are, even as Joseph dispensed for Pharaoh's interest, not indeed without a wise and kind regard for the welfare of the people, the stores of which he had taken up with Pharaoh's money in the seven plentiful years. Am I thus honest, conscientious, faithful? When the hour of our dissolution is perceived to be at hand, may we, like Jacob, be enabled to manifest our confidence in the faithfulness of God. May his promises then support and comfort the parting spirit. Assured that he will care for us after death, as well as in this life, may we bow with composure and joy to his summons to leave this world.

PRAYER.

O Lord, most mighty, most gracious, we would praise thee at all times; we would magnify thy name together. Clouds and darkness are round about thee, but justice and judgment are the foundation of thy throne. Thou givest not an ear unto any, but in exercising thy absolute sovereignty, thou doest all things well. Mercifully and graciously didst thou deal with thy people of old, God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. And art thou not the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without variableness or shadow of turning? We thank thee for the fulfilment of the promise given to Abraham of a

seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. That, in accomplishment of that promise, thine only Son took our nature, and obeyed and suffered the just for the unjust. We thank thee that Jesus Christ hath brought in an everlasting righteousness. Holy Spirit, take of the things of Christ, and communicate them to us. Communicate spiritual life to those of us whom thou mayest see to be yet dead in trespasses and sins. Fan the feeble spark into a flame. Renew and sanctify each one of us, day by day. Write thy law on our hearts, and make us a willing people in the day of thy power. Yea, Lord, let thy law be a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path. May thy statutes be our delight and our counsellors. O God, bless, for our instruction and direction, the portion of thy word that we have just read. Enable us to cultivate kindly affections one to another. Unite in the bonds of Christian love, those whom thou hast united by the ties of nature and of blood. Make us forgiving and kind, as Joseph was. Make us faithful and just, as well as kind, and affectionate, and tender-hearted, even as Joseph was faithful in all the house of Pharaoh. And as in thy mercy (glory be to thy name for it) we have One greater than Joseph to provide for us, O may we be submissive and obedient to him who is our Saviour, placing confidence in his wisdom, and power, and love. Throughout the pilgrimage of life, and amidst the solemnities of death, may we remember and be cheered by thy promises. We rejoice that they are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus; and that sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or tittle of them fail. If thou bringest us to hoary hairs, wilt thou not be with us? If thou takest us early away, shall not that be gain? O may thy presence go with us in all the journeyings of our pilgrimage, to protect and guide us. Be with us to-day in every step we take, in every duty to which we may be called, and whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, may we do all to thy glory. Hear and answer us, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE L.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XXV. 31—46.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Here is a description of a very awful and glorious scene, which every one of us shall witness, and in which we are all personally and deeply interested. We are taught the certainty, and something of the

manner of the judgment. The Son of man, robed in glory, girt about with power, attended by the holy angels, and seated on a throne of glory, is to be the judge. All nations are to be summoned before him; the inhabitants of every clime; the human race of every rank, of all ages, of every generation. The dead shall be raised. Not one sleeper in the dust, of the many millions who die between Adam and the judgment-day, shall be overlooked or a-waiting. Then we are told that the judge will separate that countless multitude into two, and only two, great divisions. This separation will be made with unerring precision, according to the real character of every individual. There will be no mistake, no partiality, no injustice; for however impossible it is for man to judge correctly concerning his fellow-men, the Son of man is thoroughly acquainted with the nature of every motive, and thought, and word, and act. Does not this knowledge, possessed and exercised by Jesus Christ as the judge of all, prove him to be really and truly God, for God claims it as his own prerogative to search the heart and know the thoughts of the children of men? Amos iv. 13. Those included in the one great division, shall be manifested to be the children of the kingdom, by the judge proclaiming before all the fruits of their faith and love to him; the kindnesses done by them, for his sake, to poor afflicted believers, whom he calls his brethren, and which kindnesses he counts done to himself. The other great division shall be manifested to be the children of perdition, meriting the awful doom pronounced on them, not merely by the proclamation of their gross sins, but by publishing their neglect of Christ's people, and so their neglect of Christ. And observe that the duration of the punishment of the wicked, and of the happiness of the righteous, is expressed by the same word, and is declared to be everlasting. If the righteous are to enjoy everlasting life, the wicked are to endure everlasting punishment. Hence, this passage contains the doctrine of eternal punishment, which some, to their everlasting ruin, it is to be feared, deny, and affect to disbelieve.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

What wonderful and important events have yet to befall us! What scenes have we to witness! What feelings to experience! Death, the resurrection, the judgment, eternity! Are we prepared for these things? How may I peacefully close my eyes in death, believing that when I open them again, it shall be in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, sitting in judgment on my soul? Soon I die, either God's friend or God's enemy; and on a great day approaching, I am to receive the public judgment either of life everlasting, or of everlasting punishment. Does it not concern me to know what I am, and what awaits me? O my soul, let me consider this matter! None but a pardoned sinner can die in peace, and receive, on the day of judgment, the award of everlasting life. But no sinner is pardoned except by a sovereign act of God's mercy, and God's mercy is exercised only through Christ's atonement and intercession; and the effect of it, so exercised, is to produce faith in the sinner; faith that worketh

by love; love first to Christ Jesus, and then to those that are his, manifested by obeying Christ's commands, and doing good and showing kindness to all especially to Christ's people. Am I such a pardoned sinner? If I am not, then sure as the Lord liveth, woe is me. If I am, then I can look forward with peace and joy to the solemn scenes and events through which I have to pass. Even the great judgment-day will be to me a day of vast enjoyment. Nevertheless, neither now, nor on that day, can I have ought of which to boast. For it is my Saviour alone who, by his grace and Spirit, worketh in me, and by me, every one of those things which, at the judgment, he, from the judgment throne, will commend, and for which he will reward me, from the foundation to the top-stone of the work of my salvation; therefore, let the praise be to grace, grace. Let us learn from this passage, that though we may have little money to give, visits of love, and acts of attention, and words of kindness to the poor and afflicted, for Christ's sake, indicate a love to the Redeemer which he notices with approbation.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, we adore thee as the greatest, the wisest, and the best of beings. We thank thee for the injunction to be careful for nothing but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to make our requests known unto thee. Seated on a throne of grace, thou hast ordained thy Son Jesus Christ the mediator of a covenant with thy people, which is ordered in all things and sure. But, O God, we would remember that, though now seated on a throne of grace, thou wilt one day appear seated on thrones of judgment. Deeply impress on our minds the fact that we are rapidly ripening for the judgment. Lay bare to us our natural unpreparedness for a day of strict impartial judgment. Lord, what can the spiritually dead expect, but to be left in the power of death eternal? But, most merciful God, we adore thee that thou hast made provision, by the scheme of redemption, for communicating spiritual life to those who are spiritually dead. We bless and thank thee for that great mystery of the gospel, the union of believers with their Saviour. O unite us to Christ, that we may be partakers of spiritual and divine life that is in him. May we, being members of Christ, be obedient and submissive to our glorious Head. May we, as members one of another, love each other as we do ourselves. Incline and enable us to do good to all as we have opportunity, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Being the disciples of a Master who went about continually doing good, may it be as our meat and our drink to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the poor and afflicted. Enable us to manifest the reality and strength of our

tude to Jesus Christ, by abounding in works of faith and labours of love. O give us such a view of our obligations to our Redeemer, as shall quell every feeling of spiritual pride, and impress us with the conviction that, when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants. O Lord, what are we that thou shouldest put it in our power to do any kindness to others? Blessed be thy name that, when we have nothing else to give, thou acceptest of our smallest acts of kindness done for thy sake. Verily, O Lord, this day's thoughts, and words, and acts, will make a part of our account at the great judgment. Pardon what thy searching eye has seen amiss; for the sake of Jesus Christ blot it out. Give thy blessing on what we have been enabled to attempt in discharge of the duties required of us. Accept of our thanks for the mercies we have received and for the comforts we have enjoyed. And now, O Lord, we would lay us down in peace, and sleep: do thou make us dwell in safety, for Christ's sake. Amen,

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE II.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XLVIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Joseph's two sons were now rather above twenty years of age, and he took them with him when called to the death-bed of his father. Jacob summoned all his remaining strength for the interview, and perhaps he was endowed with supernatural vigour, to enable him to utter the prophecies with which he was inspired. And first, he related the Lord's promise given to him at Luz or Bethel, in early life: when he was fleeing from Esau, to take refuge with his mother's kindred. Assured of the fulfilment of that promise, he declared the adoption of Joseph's two sons into the number of his sons; so that each of them should be the head of a tribe. This identified these Egypt-born children of Joseph with the rest of Jacob's descendants, and would have its influence in hindering Joseph and his family from attempting to root themselves in Egypt by purchasing estates, and conforming to the manners and worship of the Egyptians. Manasseh and Ephraim were presented by Joseph to his father to receive his blessing. The being whose blessing Jacob invoked on the young men, he called 'God, before whom his fathers, Abraham and Isaac, did walk; the God who had fed himself; the angel who had redeemed him from all evil.' This being was our Lord Jesus Christ, and this is one of the places which teach, that it was the second person of the Trinity who appeared to, and was known by, the patriarchs and other Old Testament saints. In Mal. iii. 1. Christ is called the messenger, or angel of the covenant. Also, Exod. xiv.

(compare ver. 19. with ver. 24.) Besides, Christ from the beginning was the only Mediator of reconciliation, and of all the covenants between God and man: no communion between God and man, but by him. Therefore, all the appearances and acts of deity towards men, were by this Mediator. Jacob divinely directed, persisted in laying the hand of honour, the right hand, on the head of Ephraim, the younger son; though Joseph attempted to rectify what he supposed his father's mistake, and prophesied the superiority of the tribe of Ephraim over that of Manasseh; which superiority afterwards very manifestly took place.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Important lessons may be learnt at a death-bed, especially the death-bed of a believer. Have we been privileged to witness such? If we have, were we solemnized and instructed by them? Better the portion of Ephraim and Manasseh in being joined to Jacob's house, and made sharers of the fortunes of Jacob's posterity, than anything that could have fallen to their lot in Egypt, as the sons of him who was next to Pharaoh in the kingdom. And better far, a portion with God's people, though joined with humble worldly circumstances, than the greatest possessions and honours of the ungodly. God often grants to his people beyond their hopes: Jacob had not thought to see Joseph's face, and yet God showed him Joseph's seed. Note God's sovereignty in preferring the younger son before the elder. In everything, God doeth according to his own will. Note also, the subjection of the natural affections of Jacob and Joseph to the divine will: they acquiesced at once in the divine arrangement regarding Ephraim and Manasseh. However difficult and painful it may sometimes be, to bring our natural affections into entire subjection to the appointments of providence, we must observe, through divine grace, to do so. Above all, let us, by our instructions and examples, endeavour to lead all the objects of our natural affections to Christ, and by the frequent fervent prayer of faith, commend them to his care; then we can easily accord in all the divine appointments concerning them, for we know that all things work together for good to those who love God. It is God alone who can efficiently bless; yet, words of blessing from a pious person's mouth are not to be despised, for they are the prayer of a righteous man, which availeth much. How very comforting to a dying saint to be able to leave his children and relatives to the care of his covenant God; to be able to say in the confidence of humble faith, 'Behold I die, but God shall be with you.' May this comfort be ours, when to us the solemn hour of death arrives.

PRAYER.

Almighty Jehovah, in whose hand our life is, we would come to thee this morning by that new and living way which thou hast appointed, even by Jesus Christ. Behold, O God, our Shield; look on the face of thine Anointed, and be well pleased with us in him. Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive all honour, and glory,

and praise, and blessing. Thou Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, we rejoice in thine exaltation and glory. Halleluia! he who died for our sins on Calvary, hath now on his vesture and on his thigh, a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Lord Jesus, we trust in thee. Enable us rightly to understand and value the blessedness of being numbered with thy people. May we even count the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. May we endure the difficulties and hardships of the Christian life, as seeing him who is invisible. May we look not to the things that are seen and temporal, but to the things that are unseen and eternal. Keep us mindful of thy promises, O faithful God, and may it be our strength to rest on them, and our joy to declare them in the land of our pilgrimage. And as thou art justly entitled, in the exercise of thy sovereign wisdom, to cross our inclination, and order events very differently from our judgment, may we learn and practise submission to thy will in all things. Our covenant God, we earnestly beseech thee, become the covenant God of every member of our family, and of all who are near and dear to us: then, O how safe shall they be, and how satisfied and happy shall we be; for, do not all things work together for good to them who love thee? May we all be helpers of one another's faith, and live together as fellow-heirs of heaven.

O Lord, we bear about with us bodies of sin and death. May we die daily. Let the instances of mortality that we witness, lead us to lay to heart our own latter end. We bless thee for the records of thy people's triumph over death, which we find in thy word: for the instances of it also which we have witnessed. And O, when our own dying hour cometh, let thy joy be then in our heart, and thy praises on our lips. Like Jacob, thy servant, let our faculties then be entire; and let us be strengthened to bear our testimony in the presence of beloved relatives, to the power and preciousness of the gospel salvation. We cast all our cares on thee this day. Keep us mindful of our dependence on thee, and give us grace to ask thy counsel and blessing in every step and duty of this day. With united thanksgivings for the mercies of the past night, we commend ourselves to thy keeping and guidance, and all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXXV.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XXVI. 1—35.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The triumphal entry of our Lord into Jerusalem having indicated a popular feeling in his favour, the Jewish rulers, though eager for his destruction, had determined to defer their attempt against him till after the passover, lest there should be an uproar of the people. The cry, Crucify him, crucify him, showed how little they had to fear on this behalf. It is understood to have been Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who anointed Jesus at Bethany. The resolution of the chief priests, to attempt nothing against Jesus till after the passover was soon overthrown, when Judas Iscariot, influenced by a strong desire of gain, proposed to betray him into their hands for a sum of money. In the evening, we find Jesus calm and steadfast, seated at the paschal supper with all his disciples around him. There he plainly told, that one of the twelve should betray him: thus showing Judas that he was aware of his design, and preparing the other disciples for what was about to take place. Then he showed who was to be the traitor, and intimated that traitor's tremendous guilt. Note, here is a proof of the eternity of hell's torments, for, if the sufferings of Judas were ever to terminate, and never-ending happiness succeed, it could not be said that it had been good for him that he had never been born. After the Paschal lamb had been eaten, the Lord's Supper was instituted, to commemorate, throughout the ages of the New Testament church, that death which the passover prefigured, during the times of the Jewish economy. When our Lord said of the bread, 'This is my body,' and of the wine, 'This is my blood,' he spoke figuratively, as he did when he said, 'I am the door—I am the way.' He meant, this is the representation of my body and blood. Hence, the popish doctrine of transubstantiation, which teaches that the bread and the wine are converted by the priest's consecration into the real body and blood of Christ, has no foundation in scripture, as it has none in reason:—as a further proof of which, observe that the wine, after consecration, is called by our Lord himself, 'The fruit of the vine.' 'This is my blood of the New Testament;' that is, this wine represents my blood which is to be shed as realizing and confirming the new covenant, with all its blessings to you. This drinking of new wine with his disciples in his Father's kingdom, means his partaking with them in heaven, of those pure satisfying joys which are set forth under the figure of new wine. The papists pervert this sacrament of the Supper in these three points: holding transubstantiation—refusing the cup to all save the priests, for which they have no scripture warrant—and giving an unbroken wafer instead of broken bread.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

God maketh the wrath of man to praise him; yea, the deeds of the wicked to forward the decrees of his counsel, though like the Jewish priests, when consulting and bargaining for the death of Christ, they

think not so. He deriveth praise also from the faith and love of humble affectionate disciples. Should we not devote our best—our all, to that kind Redeemer who laid down his life for our sakes? Some, even of those who profess to be Christ's followers say, Why all this? What need of it? But Christ approves of it, however humble the individual, and intrinsically valueless the gift. More precious the memorial of that affectionate woman's manifestations of her love, than the notoriety of chief priests and rulers achieved by crucifying the Son of God. We cannot show kindness to Jesus Christ personally, but he has told us, that what is done to his people, he counts done to himself. How insignificant the rewards given to the workers of iniquity! a moment's gratification for ruining a fellow-creature for time and for eternity! Nay, only thirty pieces of silver for betraying to death the Lord of glory. How dreadful the real recompense of every sin! An eternity of woe unutterable, so that it had been better for the sinner that he had never been born. How sorrowful and how jealous of ourselves should it make us, to know that so many of Christ's professing followers betray him, and bring disgrace on the profession of gospel doctrines. How extraordinary the love of Christ to his people! Knowing that Judas was to betray him—knowing that many a follower in after ages would do the same, with his own dreadful agonies in immediate prospect, he devised and instituted a feast of love, to refresh and comfort his saints till he should come again. The intrusion of the traitor then, and of hypocrites throughout ages to come, which he clearly foresaw, cooled not his love to his own. Richly he has provided for them, and if traitors and hypocrites presumptuously intrude themselves into the children's table, they must bear their iniquity. Nevertheless, let us all examine ourselves, for the heart is deceitful. Let us distrust our own strength, and be strong only in the Lord.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, what shall we render unto thee for all thine unmerited kindness? Thy mercies are new to us every morning, and thy faithfulness every night. Thou makest the outgoings of the evening and the morning to rejoice over us. May we see the hand of our reconciled Father in every comfort we enjoy. We bewail the corruption of our heart—the perverseness of our will—the sinfulness of our conduct. How much of each hast thou this day seen in every one of us? O for Christ's sake, grant a free forgiveness. Cleanse thou us, and we shall be clean. Enable us in every way to show our love to the blessed Saviour. Let us never be ashamed of manifesting the sense that we entertain of his excellency. Suffer us not to deny him; enable us to confess him before men. O Lord, we mourn over the terrible depravity of our fallen nature as exhibited by the chief priests of the Jews, and by that disciple who betrayed his Mas-

ter. Let us not forget that the same root of corruption is in us. Blessed be God for restraining grace, that may have prevented the gross out-breakings of this corruption. Lord, cleanse thou us also from secret sins. O give us a tender conscience and a humble spirit. Teach us to be very-distrustful of ourselves, and to place full trust in thee. O Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that we love thee. By thy grace and Spirit maintain that love warm and vigorous. Without a continual supply from thee, most gracious Lord, it would languish and decay. O let none of us, like Peter, shrink from acknowledging our connection with Jesus of Nazareth; though we should die for thee, we would not deny thee. For, blessed Saviour, didst thou not die for us? Didst thou not remember us with a most tender affection, even when thine own terrible agonies were very near at hand? Enable us rightly to call to remembrance thy dying love, especially as often as we sit down at the communion table. May the love of Christ constrain us to love him who first loved us, and to manifest that love all day long, and every day by a holy life and conversation. Let us be neither traitorous nor self-confident disciples; but create in us a clean heart, and renew in us a right spirit, and perfect thy strength in our weakness. And now, Lord, draw thou the curtains of safety around us. Let no sins prevail against us: let no evil or danger come near our dwelling or persons this night. Refresh us with slumber, and when we awake, may we be with thee. O Lord, hear, forgive, and do, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE II. 3.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS XLIX.

REMARKS.

This chapter contains a variety of predictions, uttered by the patriarch Jacob in the prospect of his departure; and that at a season when his words were fitted to make the deepest impression upon those to whom they were addressed, and which, therefore, were uttered at that season, as made choice of by the divine Spirit, to give to them that peculiar measure of interest and solemnity which is usually commanded by whatever falls from the lips of those who speak as dying men, and under the impression that they are soon to go the way of all the earth. And, irrespective of the influence which his words were fitted to have from this circumstance, the best effects were produced by the part which, on this occasion, Jacob was called to act; for, as a man

whose heart was touched by the grace of God, who was now ending his life in peace, and speaking of the divine doings that were to happen to his posterity,—who was teaching them no less piously how to die, than he had before taught them how piously to live,—and in addition to the inheritance which his affection was bequeathing them, was now leaving them a legacy more precious still, the efficacy of all his prayers, and the memory of many virtues. What he here did say to his children was calculated to come most impressively home to them. Brightening the last hours of his saint with the richest display of his power and presence, and enabling him to discover severally to his sons the things concerning them that should be hereafter, Jacob was an instrument in God's hand, of reproof to some of them, of joyful comfort to others, of instruction to them all. The predictions here uttered, regarding each tribe, are full of meaning, and it would require a very lengthened commentary to do justice to their exposition. That regarding Judah, in particular, is deserving of special attention, for it fixes the genealogy of the Redeemer, pointing out the tribe whence he was to descend.

But the prediction, while it showed that he was to spring from the posterity of Judah, showed, over and above this, several things regarding the character and pretensions of the Messiah. Was Judah, for instance, one who, as ver. 8. tells us, was to be the object of praise? How true this of him who was there predictively spoken of, for did not *God* praise him, and often give to him the testimony of his acceptance? Did not the *angels* praise him, and, with their songs of pious psalmody, join together in a new acclamation of joyful applause to his honour, when, in Bethlehem, he was born king of the Jews? Did not the *Spirit* praise him, and give to his work the homage of his own co-operation, by carrying its blessings home to the hearts of those for whom it was intended! Did not the *heavenly inhabitants* all praise him, and, loud as the voice of many waters, were they not heard by the apostle John, celebrating him, in the most fluent strains, as worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and blessing! Did not those, who were even strangers to his grace, and enemies to his glory, all praise him, when, acting, as they seem to have done, under a supernatural impulse, the multitude suddenly filled the air with hosannas, and signaled our Lord's last entry into Jerusalem? Nay, are there not in every age, a select company employed in singing the praises of the Redeemer, or magnifying the riches of his goodness for what he hath done for their souls? Or again, is it said of the tribe of Judah that it shall be successful and victorious in war; that his hand should be on the neck of his enemies? And how literally was this realized in Christ! Or yet again, is it predicted regarding the Messiah, that to him shall the gathering of the people be? Well, then, has it not been so in every age? Or, finally, is it said, at ver. 11. regarding Judah, binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes; a description which was intended to represent the great

abundance of wine and milk which the tribe of Judah should possess. And to the believing mind how exhibitively was all this of the fullness and freeness of those precious blessings which the Messiah's kingdom was to bring along with it!

PRAYER.

Unto thee do we desire this morning to lift up our souls, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock. Thou that dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth. We thank thee for all that goodness of which thou art ever affording us the most endearing manifestations. We would bless thee, in an especial manner, for the great love wherewith thou hast loved us in Jesus Christ, and for that display which thou hast made of thy perfections, in the scheme of our redemption through him. We thank thee for the promise thou didst make of old unto Abraham, that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed; to Jacob, that the Shiloh should come; and to the patriarchs, that they should all be righteous. We thank thee for the mercy that prompted, and for the wisdom that planned, and for the power that accomplished the great work of our redemption. We would count it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Apply to each of us the efficacy of Christ's death for pardon and purification. Create within us clean hearts, renew within us right spirits. Restore to each of us the joys of thy salvation, and grant that, in soul, body, and spirit, we may be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord. May we look to the cross of Christ, and yield to those affecting motives which it presents to all holiness, both of heart and life. As we advance in life, may we grow in likeness to thee, so that when, like the patriarch of old, we come to go the way of all the earth, we may be prepared for the enjoyment of that rest which remains for the people of God, and be enabled to say with the apostle, that we know that when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, we shall have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. With ourselves we would, this morning, be mindful of all our brethren of mankind. Add unto thy church daily such as shall be saved. Give the heathen to thy Son for an inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for a possession. Let the kingdoms of the earth become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, and to him let the gathering of the people be. Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end. Abundantly bless our temporal provision, and let there be no want in our

land. Sanctify affliction to those who are afflicted, and prepare the dying for death, and judgment, and an eternal world. Be very gracious, we beseech thee, to our friends, and to all who are connected with us by the ties of kindred, or affection, or neighbourhood. Encompass them with thy favour as with a shield, and let the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. To thy guidance and protection we would commend ourselves this day, both as a family and as individuals. Do thou instruct us to avoid the temptations that may be before us, or help us to overcome them, and making it as our meat and our drink to do thy will all the day long, may we walk in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Hear our prayers in these things, and be pleased to send us an answer in peace, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLII. 5.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XXVI. 36—75.

REMARKS.

In what is here stated regarding our Lord, between ver. 36—40. we have two most useful lessons in what is one of the most delightful departments of practical piety, namely, that of private prayer.

What our Lord here did, teaches us the obligation of prayer, even when all appearances seem against the success of it. The language employed by the Saviour on this occasion, and the temper he displayed, were such as to show how much the aspect of his present state did argue against a favourable issue to any supplication he might present. 'O my Father,' he said, 'if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' Indeed he knew, as we learn from St John, at the very moment that he offered it, that the cup of his sorrows was not to pass away from him. Yet he still prayed in the words now mentioned; and persuaded though he felt that the cup should not pass, he, at the same time, never doubted that the petition he presented should not be uttered in vain, that though not answered in the way he expressed, it should yet virtually be heard, and produce the effect, if not of removing the cup, yet of preparing and fortifying the mind to drink it.

Now we may all find comfort in this example, amid the heaviest pressures of our state, and if, under all our sorrows, we repair to the footstool of mercy, pour forth the prayer that is not more expressive of our wants than characteristic of our importunity, and never once doubt that its fulfilment is a thing which God delights to give, commands that we should ask, and warrants us to expect, we shall then be like-minded with him who, when his sorrows began to darken, offered up prayers and supplications to him that was able to save, and as his sorrows increased,

prayed the more earnestly. In even the most fervent supplications which we offer, we may not receive what we ask, but still we may receive what is better than we ask, and there is an effect produced by the mere exercise of prayer upon the tone and temper of the mind that is itself its own reward. We can never be aware whether any, and what part of our petitions is to be directly answered. Yet we have the warrant of Christ's example for believing that, whether we are to be relieved from approaching suffering or not, our duty and our interest do both lie in seeking a refuge beneath the shadow of his right hand who considers our trouble, and knows the soul in adversity; in making him the depository of all our griefs who, though he doth afflict us, is a Father still, and in never for one moment doubting that, though the direct deliverance which we ask is not to be granted, yet the prayer itself shall not return back without some blessing sent along with it. Blessed indeed are those families who thus call upon the name of the Lord. Shielded by the armour of prayer, affliction, however much it may disturb, will yet have no power to overwhelm them, and if St Paul's distresses be engraven on the forehead of their state, St Paul's comforts and consolations will also be engraven on it. 'We are troubled on every side,' said that great apostle, 'but not in distress; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.'

Our Lord here teaches us another lesson on the subject of prayer. He instructs us in the pre-eminent value of that prayer which is secret and solitary. We read at ver. 39. that he went a little farther than, that is to say, a little beyond, his disciples, and fell upon his face, and prayed. He did not open his heart even to his own disciples. He could not unbosom himself to his Father so long as even they were witnesses of the sorrows he should utter, and though he doubted not their sympathy with him, he nevertheless did withdraw himself about a stone's-cast from them, and felt it indispensable that he should be alone. And thus it is, more or less, with praying men. There is an air of stillness and of solitude that is congenial to the state of the mind when under the pressure of its spiritual wants. There are griefs into which none but God can enter, and there is a bitterness of the heart with which the stranger that is in our own house is not permitted to intermeddle. We cannot divest ourselves of the belief that God is peculiarly gracious at the voice of our 'secret cry.' Sweet is the comfort to be derived from calling upon God in the meeting of his saints, or from blessing him with our household at home. But, to a pious man, the happier hours of devotion are the hours which he spends in pouring out his heart in the presence of God alone. Learn then, O man, the lesson here read out by thy Saviour. 'And thou, therefore, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.'

PRAYER.

We thank thee, O Lord, for that liberty of access which we ever have to the footstool of

thy throne of grace. We desire to come before thee this evening, as we are permitted to do in the multitude of thy tender mercies, blessing thee for the assurance thou hast given us, that thou art the bearer of prayer, and the comforter of all of us in all our tribulations, and rejoicing to believe, that if we approach thee in his name whom thou hearest always, thou wilt listen to our cry, and wilt fulfil our petitions, and even, while we are yet speaking, wilt condescend to hear. O hear the prayer we desire to put up, for mercy to pardon our offences, and grace to help us in the time of need. We are sinners in thy sight, and we acknowledge before thee the need in which we stand of his salvation, who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; whose soul was exceeding sorrowful, and who bore the chastisement of our peace. We pray for a conformity to the death of Jesus Christ. Seeing that we are at enmity with thee, do thou reconcile us by the death of thy Son. Knowing the plagues of our sinful hearts, may we seek shelter beneath the sanctuary of his cross, who was there lifted up as an hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest of divine wrath, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. And O, for his sake, do thou send thy Holy Spirit into our hearts. Without him we can do nothing well pleasing in thy sight. Pour him out, therefore, in rich abundance upon us. Work in us through him the whole of thy good pleasure, and the work of faith with power. We thank thee for the mercies of the day. We commit ourselves to thy protection throughout the night, and reposing beneath the shelter of thy wings, we will not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flieth by day, nor of the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor of the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. We would commend to thee the large family of affliction. Hear the cry of the humble, revive the spirit of the disconsolate, supply the wants of the needy, comfort those who are bereaved, and prepare the dying for their great change. Hear our prayers, and forgive our sins, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE VIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—GENESIS L.

REMARKS.

There is much instruction to be gathered from the incidents referred to in this chapter. The pious solemnities that were performed with reference to

the interment of Jacob and Joseph, are fitted to remind us of the duty and respect which we owe, in regard of the sepulture of our departed friends. So far indeed, as they themselves are concerned, it matters not what seemly decencies are paid toward the remains of our deceased brethren. In the language of inspiration, 'they know not any thing; also their love, and their hatred, and their envy are now perished; neither have they any more a portion in any thing that is done under the sun.' But though this be the case, we are yet taught by our very nature to pay, by a becoming interment, the homage of our respect to the bodies of the dead, both as being a part of material human nature, and in reference to the immortal spirits of which they were once the tenements, to comfort ourselves amid our heaviness, by the expression of our dearness to the departed, of their worth to us, and of our value for them. Having its foundation in nature, the custom has existed in almost all countries. Even the Saviour himself permitted the cost of Mary's ointment upon his head and feet, because she did it against his burial, and did commend to the esteem of all posterity the respectful regard she thus showed him, while the affecting circumstances of his own interment, when it did take place, did sanction the seemly respects which are shown to the remains of the departed.

How instructive too is the conduct of Joseph, as here exhibited. He was now upon his dying bed, and the frame of his spirit then, just indicated what had been the frame of it in the vigour and maturity of life. Instead of being anxious about the disposal of his temporal revenues, which were perhaps very great, the bent and bias of his mind had run upon the covenant God had entered into with Abraham, and the progressive fulfilment that was carrying on regarding it. As an apostle tells us, he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and he gave commandment concerning his bones, and he did this in the exercise of faith. He made mention, we say, in faith of the departing of the children of Israel, calling it into his own mind, and over and above this, making a profession in the presence of others of the confidence he reposed in its accomplishment, and assuring them, as we may gather from what he says to his brethren in ver. 24. that, in despite of all their affliction in Egypt, they should yet be led forth out of it, and that though he should not live to see their deliverance, he did nevertheless die in the faith of it. And he gave commandment also in faith concerning his bones, charging them to carry up his bones along with them when they went to Canaan, and doing so, that he might at once manifest the confidence he put in the accomplishment of the promise, and the dutiful reverence which he cherished for the memory of Jacob his father, who, in the exercise of the same grace of faith, did purchase a burial place there as an earnest, and as indicating a persuasion, of future possession. And we know that his charge was strictly complied with. His brethren, we read, embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt. And Moses ultimately took it under his protection, and in the end, the mortal remains of this man of God were conveyed in

safety to Canaan, and buried in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor, and which he left as an inheritance to the children of Joseph. How instructive this pattern of faith! Let us imitate the patriarch in this respect. Let us pray that our faith may be increased, and trust in the divine testimony, knowing that whatever God hath promised, he is faithful and able to perform it.

PRAYER.

We desire, O Lord, to come before thee at this time, and to bless thee for the rest and preservation of the past night. While many since last night, have slept the sleep of death, many more been laid down on beds of affliction, from which they shall arise no more, on this side of eternity, we are preserved before thee in health of body, and in soundness of mind;—the living, O Lord, the living to praise thee, as we desire to do this day. Thou hast preserved us, but our time is both short and uncertain. Behold thou hast made our days as an handbreadth, and our age is as nothing before thee, and though a man do live threescore and ten years, and rejoice in them all, yet dost thou at last bring him to death, and to the house appointed for all living. And the frailty we experience is the fruit of our corruption. Thou with rebukes dost correct man for his iniquity; thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth. O humble us when we think of our guilt in the sight of Almighty God. May we betake ourselves to him who gave his life a ransom for many, and his flesh for the life of the world, and died that he might put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh. Jacob is not, and Joseph is not. For there is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit: neither hath he power on the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war. But though man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more, yet blessed be thy name, for the prospect of that glorious inheritance which thou hast revealed in thy word, and confirmed by thy grace. Do thou grant that we may ever have respect to it. Unlike the men of this world, may we remember that there remaineth a rest for the people of God, and exercise an holy fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into rest, any of us should seem to come short of it. Being strangers and pilgrims upon earth, as all our fathers were, may we walk as citizens of another country; and knowing that this is thy will respecting us, even our sanctification, and that no unrighteous person shall inherit the kingdom of Christ, and of God, O may we ever abound in those fruits of

righteousness which are to thy praise and glory, always doing those things which are acceptable in thy sight, so that when the day does come that like Jacob we must gather up our feet into the bed and yield up the ghost, and be gathered unto our people, we may be ready to give in our account, and found meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Thou who art the God of all the families on the earth, we beseech thee to dwell in this house. May the name of it be, The Lord is there. Do thou say of it, This is my rest, here will I take up my abode. May every member of this family be a member of that family of which Christ is the head. Preserve each of us this day from those numerous accidents to which human life is ever exposed. Keep each of us from all evil, especially from sin, the greatest of evil. Hold up our goings in thy paths, that our footsteps slip not. And unto thee, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost be ascribed, as is most due, all glory, and honour, and power, and praise world without end. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXII. 11.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XXVII. 1—32.

REMARKS.

Several important purposes were subserved by the admission of a traitor into the number of Christ's own immediate disciples, and one of these certainly was, the stronger testimony which was thereby given to the truth of his own character and mission. We read at ver. 4. that Judas said, that he had betrayed innocent blood. And the force of his testimony consists in this, that it was his interest, if he could, to have proved him guilty. We see a man competent to judge of Christ, prejudiced against Christ, favoured with the best opportunities of observing Christ, and even after he had betrayed him, we see this man bearing testimony to the spotlessness of his character, and acquitting him of all the crimes with which he had been charged. We need no better evidence that he was innocent, than the evidence that Judas did say it. We may be assured that, considering what he had done, he would have borne another testimony to him, could another testimony have been borne. Judas was not the man to declare him innocent, could any suspicion of guilt have been thrown upon him. But he knew that he was innocent, and the moment therefore, that conscience was allowed to speak, that moment he exclaimed that he had sinned, in that he had betrayed innocent blood; and he made this declaration too, be it remembered, in circumstances of affecting interest, in the prospect of death, under the immediate view of a world of retribution, when impressed with the terrors of a tribunal, before which he was about to appear. We

look upon all this therefore, as unequivocal evidence to the truth of our Saviour's mission and character. We regard it as evidence just so much the stronger, the more wicked and ungrateful Judas can be proved to be; and we may in this justly admire the wisdom of God, in making the very wrath of men to praise him, in multiplying the proofs of the Saviour's divine commission, by the agency even of very gross and very guilty characters, in deriving as much strength to his own cause from the lips of a very traitor, as was ever derived to it from those who sealed their faith with their blood.

How affectingly, too, is there here set before us the despair which is the result of an incomplete repentance. Judas was grieved because of the guilt which he had committed, but he wanted that in his repentance,—an apprehension, namely, of the mercy of God in Christ,—without which, repentance can never be of a 'godly sort,' and therefore did he pour out his soul in an agony of despair. An apprehension of divine mercy is just as necessary an element in true repentance, as a consciousness of demerit; and under our conviction of guilt, and our grief and humiliation because of it, instead of giving way to a spirit of despondent horror, we should never forget that such a punishment has been borne to atone for it as may appease the justice that has been provoked, that such a ransom has been paid to redeem us, as may discharge the debt that is incurred by it, that such a sacrifice has been presented, as may save us from the retribution of which it has made us the object, that such assistance has been provided as may well revive our feeblest hopes, and that we are invited, and besought, and even commanded, to take the advantage of them.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we would come this evening before thee, with the offering of humility and self-abasement. Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell in thy sight. Thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Wherewithal shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves in the presence of the most High God. We are indeed a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters, who have forsaken the Lord, and trampled under foot the Son of God, and done despite to the Spirit of grace. Lord give us to come before thee mourning over and confessing our multiplied transgressions. Humble us under a sense of our guilt, and yet suffer us not to fall into any despondency of thy mercy, but give us that everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, which, in the gospel of thy Son, we are encouraged to cherish. We bless thee for the provision made for sinners in the gospel; that thou hast there made known to us a Redeemer by whose merits thy mercy is manifested in the salvation of sinners, even while thy justice is satisfied in the condemnation of sin. O for his sake take away all our iniquity; receive us

graciously, heal our backsliding, and love us freely. Give us that repentance which is after a godly sort, and which never needeth to be repented of, and sanctify to us the gift of thy Son, in his turning each of us from his iniquity. Impart unto us that faith which is his peculiar gift, which worketh by love, which purifieth the heart, which overcometh the world, which is fruitful in every good word and work. Clothe us with the robes of his righteousness, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, that we may be found in him, and may know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death. And grant, holy Father, that he who was made manifest in our nature, may be made manifest in our persons. Help us, we beseech thee, by the agency of thy Spirit, to abstain even from the appearance of evil. Reclaim us from every wicked to every perfect way, from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from the love and the service of satan, to the love and the service of thee our God. And for this end do thou sanctify all our means of grace. Bless to us this evening the reading of thy word, that it may be profitable to direct; the privilege of prayer, that we may be refreshed, as we draw nigh to thee, in this act of devotion; the ordinance of affliction, that we may feel we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world; bless to us the appointment of the Christian Sabbath; and when we worship thee on the first day of the week, may we find that thou art specially gracious on that day of rest. And with ourselves we desire to remember before thee all our brethren of mankind. Send the knowledge of the gospel to the heathen; make the savour of Christ's name manifest in every place. Our friends we commend to thy friendship, our enemies to thy forgiveness, our benefactors to thy reward. Visit the abodes of the afflicted and the dying, and give to them that support and those consolations which this world cannot give, and which death itself cannot take away. Spread over us the wings of thy protection this night. Be thou our refuge and our defence, and if agreeable to thy will, may we be raised up in health and strength, on the morning of a new day, fitted for its duties, and fortified for its trials. Hear our prayers in these things; God of our righteousness, forgive our unworthiness to appear before thee, and bless us, and accept of us, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

SEVENTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXIII. I.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS XXIII. XXIV.

REMARKS.

PSALM XXIII. This psalm is thought to have been composed by David, after he was delivered out of the many troubles and persecutions he had suffered during the life of Saul, and was firmly established in his kingdom. It expresses, accordingly, in very simple and beautiful language, the peace and security he was enjoying; his thankfulness to God, the author of all his mercies, and implicit confidence in God's continued goodness. David compares the goodness of God, in regard to the blessings, temporal and spiritual, he enjoyed, to that of a shepherd leading his flock to feed among rich pastures, and to quench their thirst beside the gentle flowing stream. This figurative allusion to the pastoral life, by which the psalmist illustrates, in the first four verses, the goodness of God's providence and the riches of his grace, is changed, in ver. 5. to that of a sumptuous feast. God's preparing a feast for him even in the presence of his enemies, is very expressive of the abundant support and happiness David experienced when placed in the most desperate circumstances. The allusion to the custom, in eastern countries, of pouring rich oils on the heads of guests, and presenting them with an overflowing cup, in token of hospitality, illustrates still farther the divine goodness towards David, and therefore, his past experience naturally leads him to express his confidence that the same goodness will be continued during his remaining time on earth, and that he shall enjoy the high privilege of serving God for ever.

The image of a shepherd is frequently employed, in allusion to the most high God. Agreeably to this figure of speech, his people are his sheep, and his holy word is the food by which they are fed. What common food is to the body, the promises of God's word are to the soul of the believer; its nourishment and support, amidst the duties and trials of this world, till he reaches the better country, where he shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more.

Jehovah promised, Ezek. xxxiv. 23. 'I will set up one Shepherd over (his people) them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.' This promise of God's continued care and protection of his church he performed, by sending into the world his only begotten and well beloved Son, 'the great,' 'the good,' and 'chief shepherd' of God's people, who 'gave even his life for the sheep.' See John x. xii. 15, &c.

PSALM XXIV. is generally believed to have been composed for the memorable occasion of the ark of God being brought by David, and the whole nation of Israel, from the house of Obed-edom to mount Zion, the place of its future residence. Ver. 1, 2. celebrate the infinite dignity and sovereignty of Jehovah, as the Creator of all things. Ver. 3—6.

describe the character and happiness of the true and acceptable worshipper. The procession having arrived on Mount Zion, and the ark, containing the symbol of the divine presence, having been carried to the gates of the place prepared for its reception, the Levites are supposed to be divided into two choirs, and to sing alternately the 7th and remaining verses, in which the majesty of the one living and true Jehovah, as the creator, preserver, and moral ruler of the universe, is celebrated in the loftiest strains.

This psalm may be considered, by way of accommodation, as a prophetic description of our Saviour's exaltation to heaven, an event, above all others, interesting to Christians, as affording the most astonishing and convincing proof of the divinity of his character and mission, the truth of his doctrine, the acceptance of his sacrifice, and the certainty of his second and glorious appearance. The holy places, made with hands, into which the ark was carried, were the figures of the true, into which our Lord has entered, Heb. ix. 24. He is the Lord of glory. 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.' The Lord of hosts, mighty in battle, having ascended to heaven in glorious triumph over death, in his own person, and from which we are assured of his return, to conquer this last enemy for his people. Let it be our earnest prayer that we may cultivate that purity of heart which is indispensably necessary to qualify us for the service of God on earth, and his enjoyment in heaven.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we adore thee as the Father of light and of life, with whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning. From thee cometh down every good and every perfect gift. We adore thee as the author of our being, and the great source of all our happiness. Thy providence has sustained us in life, and supplied all our returning wants. Thou hast preserved us from dangers which we could neither have foreseen nor prevented. When from the power of sin within us, or the influence of temptation from without, we have, like sheep gone astray, each turning to his own way, thou hast magnified thy great name, even the riches of thy mercy and grace in Jesus Christ, in bringing us back to thyself, the shepherd and bishop of our souls, in restoring us to peace of mind, and causing us to walk in the paths of righteousness. We acknowledge our great unworthiness of all the goodness, the mercy, and the truth which thou hast shown us. Thy goodness we have often requited with ingratitude, and thy laws, which are holy, just, and good, we have often violated. Enter not into judgment with us, for in thy sight no living can be justified. For the sake of thy Son, our advocate and intercessor with thee, the Father, forgive us all our past offences, and grant us thy Holy Spirit to renew us more and more in the

spirit of our mind, and restore unto us even the joy of thy salvation. Keep us straight and undefiled in the way of thy commandments, and let our dwelling be in thy house for ever. We desire to render unto thee our united gratitude for thy providential care of us during the past night, and for the light and mercies of a new morning, even another sabbath of the Son of man. May we be deeply impressed with a sense of our invaluable privileges as Christians, and enabled to walk worthy of them. Whilst many of our fellow-creatures, through the ignorance that is in them, are bowing down themselves to stocks, and stones, and graven images, the works of men's hands, we are invited to worship thee, the creator of heaven and earth, the preserver and moral ruler of the universe, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and in him the God and Father of all who believe. Prepare our hearts for thy service, this day, in the sanctuary, that we may worship thee, who art a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. Forbid that we should draw near unto thee with the mouth, whilst our hearts are wandering after the vanities of the world. May we approach thee with clean hands, and a pure heart. May thy servants in the ministry be enabled to preach the gospel with all plainness and fidelity, and the hearers to receive the word of truth with faith and affection, that it may have an abiding influence on their principles, and temper and conduct; and may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXV. 6.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XXV.

REMARKS.

Although it is uncertain on what particular occasion this psalm was written by David, it is probable, from ver. 11, 15—19. that the distress, perplexity, and difficulties into which he was plunged, by the rebellion of his son Absalom, may have given rise to it. In ver. 7. he prays God 'not to remember the sins of his youth,' and in ver. 11. to 'pardon his iniquity, for it is very great;' referring, no doubt, to certain aggravated sins he had committed in his youth, and which he may have considered as the remote and prime cause of his son's rebellion having been permitted. Then, in the 15th and following

verses, he speaks of himself as being ensnared, desolate, and afflicted, as having numerous enemies, hating him without any just cause of offence; and, in ver. 22. he prays for the restoration and happiness of his nation, which supposes it, at that time, to have been in a distracted condition.

Agreeably to this condition, in which David is supposed to have been when he composed this psalm, he expresses (ver. 1—3.) his confidence in God for every blessing, but especially for protection from his enemies, and prays most earnestly that his trust in God may be made to appear to be well founded; that he may at no time have cause to be ashamed of it, by his enemies obtaining any triumph over him.

God being our creator, preserver, and redeemer, the God in whom we live, and move, and have our existence, and without whom we can do nothing, it is impossible we can exceed in the confidence we ought to repose in him. As God, however, dispenses all his blessings through the instrumentality of means, it is evident that well founded confidence, for obtaining any blessing, whether temporal or spiritual, implies, on our part, the faithful use of those means which he hath appointed, otherwise our confidence is founded in ignorance, or what is worse, in presumption, and therefore David prays as in ver. 4, 5.

When we are compassed with difficulties, and our hearts cast down, or almost overwhelmed by a sense of guilt or danger, the remembrance of any deliverance we may have experienced ourselves, or the recorded examples of the goodness of God's providence to others, generally proves a source of great comfort, and even strong encouragement to trust in his mercy and goodness.

Such appear to have been the sentiments which influenced David, when, in the 6th and remaining verses, he reminds God of the character he has always sustained for mercy and faithfulness towards the humble, the penitent, and the afflicted, and those who are sincerely desirous to do whatever they know to be his will. Such persons, David assures us, are not only blessed in themselves, but that also their 'seed shall inherit the earth,' (land) i. e. the land of Canaan, which the nation of Israel were to continue to inherit whilst they continued obedient, and which, being a type of heaven, contains a promise of an eternal inheritance to the man who feareth the Lord, and trains up his seed (children) to imitate his own example.

What additional reason have we Christians to exercise faith in God that he will fulfil all his promises, the truth of which have been so amply confirmed to us under this new and better covenant, sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ, who died for our offences, and was raised again for our justification, and who lives for ever in heaven as our great high priest, and is able to save for ever all who come unto God by him.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. Thou art near unto all who call upon thee in truth and sincerity. Thou art a present help in every time of need. They

who know thy name have trusted in thee, and they who have trusted in thee have never been disappointed. We bless thee for the clear and full discovery thou hast given us, in thy holy word, of thy character and our own duty, and the way to immortal life and happiness. But we acknowledge that we have not made that improvement of our privileges which we ought to have done; that, instead of seeking that wisdom which cometh from above, we have been trusting to our own wisdom and strength; walking according to the counsels of our own hearts, which are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. We have gone astray from thee, even from our very youth. Remember not against us the sins of our youth, nor the transgressions of our riper years. In the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out all our iniquities, and fill us with that godly sorrow for sin which worketh repentance unto salvation, and which needeth not to be repented of. Thou art the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. This is thy name and memorial to all generations, and we rejoice to know that, though thy throne is encompassed with clouds and darkness, and thy footsteps hid in the mighty deep, yet justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne, righteousness and peace go before thy face continually, and all thy paths are mercy and truth unto them that keep thy covenant and thy testimonies. Be thou at all times our refuge and defence, and when at any time our hearts are overwhelmed with grief, lead us to the rock that is higher than we. May our minds be stayed on thee, and filled with that peace which flows from an interest in thy favour, and the well founded hope of future and eternal happiness. May we be anxious about nothing in this world, but in every thing, by prayer for such blessings as we need, and deprecation against the evils to which we are exposed, and thanksgiving for thy mercies, let our requests be made known unto thee, and do thou, the God of peace, fill us with all peace in believing. Follow with a rich blessing the preaching of the gospel. May the time soon come when all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto thee, the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations come and worship before thee. Bless our native country, and all ranks of persons among us, and grant that we may be distinguished more and more for that righteousness which exalteth a nation, and may we hate sin, which is the reproach, and must prove the ruin, of any people. Bless all our friends and relations. Reward our benefactors; forgive our

enemies; and enable us from the heart to forgive those who offend us. We commit the keeping of our souls to thee this night, as unto a faithful Creator, and do thou, who neither slumberest nor sleepest, preserve us from all evil. Forgive the sins of our holy duties, for sin mingles with our best services, and help us to spend all our remaining sabbaths and time on earth in a manner acceptable to thee, and profitable to ourselves, that we may be admitted to the enjoyment of that everlasting rest which remaineth for the people of God. These blessings we humbly but earnestly ask of thee, in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXIX. 8.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS I.

REMARKS.

The chief subject of this book is the departure of the nation of Israel out of Egypt, as is implied in the name Exodus, which signifies the going out or departure. The book of Genesis, besides a general history of the first ages of the world, contains the history of Abraham, and his posterity by Jacob, and ends with the death of Joseph, embracing a period of 2370 years. The book of Exodus includes an additional period of 144 years, extending from the death of Joseph, to the erection of the tabernacle, after the Israelites had been one year in the wilderness.

The first chapter begins with the names of Jacob's sons; who, with their families that went down into Egypt, amounted to seventy persons. It next gives an account of their great increase, after the death of Joseph and his brethren, in order to show God's truth and faithfulness in fulfilling the promise made to Abraham (Gen. xv. 5.) regarding his numerous descendants by Isaac. The 8th and remaining verses give an account of the grievous nature of the oppression suffered by the Israelites, which was also the subject of prediction, (Gen. xv. 13.) and the cruel and barbarous method to which Pharaoh and his people had recourse to prevent any increase of the Israelites, lest by exceeding the Egyptians in number, they might eventually become their masters.

The condition of the Israelites in 'the land of Egypt, and the house of bondage,' may be considered as an emblem of spiritual slavery.

How degrading soever and miserable the slavery of the human body may be considered by us, and must have been felt by the Israelites, yet the slavery of the human mind to sin is infinitely more, inasmuch that, if continued, it deprives the individual of all true happiness, not only in the present, but also in the future life. He who is a slave to his appetites or passions, instead of keeping them in

subordination to reason and conscience, enlightened by the word of God, is lost to virtue and holiness and spiritual improvement. In such a condition, without the moral image of his Maker, he must be destitute of all true peace of mind; and, being unfit for the happiness of heaven, necessarily excludes himself from its blessed society. The individual condemned to bodily slavery in this world may at the same time be a freeman of Christ, (1 Cor. vii. 22.) and blessed with that spiritual liberty wherewith all the children of God are made free indeed. He knows that his sufferings terminate with the present life, and are even the means, through the divine blessing, of preparing him for the happiness of eternity; whereas, he who is a slave, in a moral or spiritual sense, can have no true peace here nor happiness hereafter. Let it be our earnest, importunate and daily prayer, that we may be redeemed more and more from all iniquity; from the reigning power of sin within us, and the influence of temptation, and purified unto Christ, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. (See Rom. vi.) The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we adore thee as the great creator, the constant preserver, and the moral ruler of the universe. Thou doest according to thy will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; no creature can stay thy hand from working, nor say unto thee, What doest thou. Thou rulest over the kingdoms of men, rendering all their plans and counsels subservient to the accomplishment of thine own infinitely wise and gracious purposes. Thou causest the wrath of man to praise thee, and restrainest the remainder of his wrath. We are all in thy hand as the clay is in the hand of the potter, and thou canst do with us whatever seemeth good in thy sight. We rejoice to know that thou art not only the sovereign ruler of the universe, and the disposer of all lots, but also that thy goodness and wisdom are equal to thy greatness. Thou art indeed angry with the wicked every day; but thine eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show thyself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards thee. May our minds be impressed at all times, with a deep sense of the majesty and purity of thy character, and our own sinfulness and unworthiness. Lead us more and more to see what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from God. We bless and adore thy great name, that when all flesh had wandered from the love and service of thee, the one living and true God,—when there was no eye to pity nor hand to help; thine eye saw and pitied, and thy right arm brought salvation. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath

visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation in the house of his servant David, as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us. We bless thee for the faithfulness thou hast shown, in performing thy promises of mercy to thy church, and for the deliverances which thou hast often wrought in her behalf. We especially bless and adore thee, for the great salvation thou hast wrought for us by thy Son Jesus Christ. We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. We pray, O Lord, that as we profess to be thy redeemed children—redeemed, not with such corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; may we consider ourselves as bound, by every obligation, to thy service. Let us not yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but may we yield ourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Let no sin at any time obtain dominion over us; aid us by thy Holy Spirit, to live not to ourselves, but to him who died for us and rose again. Make us truly grateful for thy preserving care during the past night, and for the light and mercies of this morning. Preserve us this day from all evil, and enable us faithfully and conscientiously to do our duty. Whilst engaged in the duties of our calling during the week, may we retain on our minds a sense of thy presence, and of the great account we must render unto thee. We pray for the whole family of man, that all who are partakers of our common nature, may soon be partakers of our Christian privileges. Bless our native country, and all ranks of persons among us. Sanctify affliction to all who are visited with it, and prepare the dying for their great change. Guide us by thy counsel while we live, and afterwards receive us into glory, and all we ask is for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLIV.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XXVII. 33—66.

REMARKS.

Calvary, the place where our Saviour was crucified, is here called Golgotha, a Hebrew word which signifies the place of a skull, 'so called by some from

its fancied resemblance to a skull, but more probably either because criminals were executed there, or perhaps because the place contained sepulchral caverns for the dead.' Many of the particulars connected with our Saviour's last sufferings and death, having been the subject of ancient prediction, their exact fulfilment in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, is here narrated to convince the candid and humble inquirers, especially among the Jews, that Jesus of Nazareth, who had suffered the infamous death of crucifixion, was indeed the true Messiah promised in the Old Testament Scriptures, and the Saviour of the world; and thus to do away with the offence of the cross, which was occasioned by the ignorance and prejudices of the Jewish nation, as well as by the philosophical speculations of the Greeks, (1 Cor. i. 22. &c.) and thus also to confirm the faith of all in the truth of the Christian religion; and in particular, of the promises of the gospel which are so wonderfully adapted to the sinful and helpless condition of man.

Among the miraculous circumstances connected with our Saviour's sufferings and death, the rending of the vail of the temple is both instructive and interesting to every believer. This seems to have been the inner vail of the temple, which separated the most holy place, which was typical of heaven, from the holy, and into which the high priest only could enter once every year with the blood of a sacrificed animal. The vail itself was a type of our Saviour's flesh or human nature. (Heb. x. 20.) When this vail therefore, which concealed the most holy place, was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, at the moment our Saviour cried with a loud voice, 'It is finished,' and yielded up his spirit into the hands of his Father, this was evidently intended to intimate most significantly the dissolution of the old covenant, or Mosaic dispensation, and the commencement of the new covenant, or Christian dispensation, under which the Gentiles, in common with the Jews, were to be admitted to a share of all the blessings and privileges of God's children: that Jesus Christ, in virtue of the acceptance of his sacrifice, was henceforth to appear in heaven as our great high priest and intercessor; and that, through his mediation, all believers should have access unto God, for the acceptance of their persons and their title to eternal life. (See Heb. ix.)

Whilst the darkness over all the land, the earthquake, and the rending of the rocks, were evident demonstrations of the innocence of the sufferer, as well as of the dignity of his character; the opening of the graves was evidently designed to teach us, that a flood of light was to be thrown on the doctrine of immortality by our Saviour's own death and resurrection, whilst the circumstance of the bodies of departed saints not having been raised to life till after our Saviour's own resurrection, must have also been designed to show that he is what the beloved disciple denominates him, 'the first begotten of the dead,' i. e. the first of the whole human family who rose from the state of the dead to die no more; that in this, as in every other thing, 'he might have the pre-eminence.' How consoling to Christians to be assured that their Saviour and elder brother, who was dead,

is now in heaven; that he has taken possession of it in the name of his people; that he sits at the right hand of God, as our great high priest and all-powerful intercessor; and that, in due time, he shall return from the most holy place, not made with hands, to bless his people with eternal life. Let it be our prayer that we may be enabled to suffer with Christ; to bear our trials in this world with a similar spirit of patience, and resignation, and fortitude, that we may also reign with him for ever, in his Father's kingdom.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art holy who inhabitest the praises of Israel; thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; evil shall not dwell with thee, neither shall the foolish stand in thy presence. We acknowledge our great unworthiness to come into thy presence, or to take thy name into our sinful lips. We are altogether as an unclean thing: we have gone astray from thee, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out unto ourselves cisterns—broken cisterns, that can hold no water. When we reflect on the sins we have committed, and the duties we have neglected, we acknowledge that we have great reason to lay our hands on our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, crying, Unclean, unclean, God be merciful to us sinners. We bless thee, though we are unworthy to lift up our eyes unto the place where thine honour dwelleth, that we are not only permitted but encouraged to come unto thee, in the name of Jesus Christ our great high priest, who died for our sins and rose again for our justification, and who liveth for ever in heaven to make intercession for his people. We bless thee, that he came into the world on the great errand of our salvation: that he was obedient to the whole will of his Father unto death, even the death of the cross; and that, in token of thine acceptance of his sacrifice, thou didst raise him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in thee. We bless thee that thou art in Christ reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing unto men their sins and trespasses, and that through him we may be justified from all those things from which we could not have been justified by the law of Moses. May we see more and more the evil nature of sin, and the value of that salvation which is through Christ, and which shall be followed with eternal glory. Enable us to follow out the great end of our Saviour's death and resurrection; as he died an offering for sin, may we die to its love and practice; and as he rose to the power of an endless life in his Father's kingdom, may we set our affections chiefly on things above, where Christ sitteth at thy right hand. May we receive the doctrines of Christ

with faith and affection, and endeavour to imitate his example in his suffering, as well as in his active obedience, doing with diligence and fidelity whatever we know to be our duty, and suffering with patience and fortitude whatever thou art pleased to appoint, and may we be preserved safe unto the day of complete redemption. Having boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, may we come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Forgive the sins we have this day committed, and our shortcomings in duty. We pray that the boundaries of Messiah's kingdom may be extended, that he may see more and more of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. Visit the fatherless and the widow, comfort the afflicted, and prepare the dying for their great change. Watch over us this night, and let no evil come nigh our dwelling. While we live, may we live unto the Lord; when we die, may we die unto the Lord; that being thine in time, we may also be thine in eternity. These our humble, but earnest supplications, we present in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM II.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 2. Moses is called 'a goodly child;' by Paul, (Heb. xi. 23.) 'a proper child;' and by Stephen, (Acts vii. 20.) 'exceeding or divinely fair,' all which expressions seem to imply, not only that there was great natural beauty, but something uncommon in his appearance, which convinced his parents that providence intended him for some important service. Ver. 5. The ancient Egyptians bathed once at least every day in the Nile, and probably the princess and her attendants had a particular place assigned them, which Jochebed was aware of. Ver. 9. Moses' mother was hired to nurse him, by which remarkable arrangement of providence he was not only preserved from the premature fate of the other Hebrew boys, but educated in the knowledge and worship of the one living and true God. Ver. 11. By a law of ancient Egypt, whoever saw a person on the highway maltreating or attempting to murder another, might punish the offender, or put him to death; Moses was therefore guilty of no crime, according to the customs of his country, in slaying the contentious Egyptian. But, in the state of public feeling against the Israelites, it would not have been safe for him to become the public assenter of their rights, and hence the necessity of his flight. Ver. 15. It is the im-

morial custom of travellers to repose at wells, which, being places of public resort, enable them to obtain any necessary intelligence. The shepherds, who are often young women, repair to them at certain hours with their flocks.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

What a memorable instance does this chapter furnish of the truth of God, and his faithfulness to his promise. Nearly 400 years had elapsed since he had promised to Abraham that Canaan was to be the inheritance of his posterity. And, apparently in the face of this promise, they were enslaved in a foreign land; their spirits crushed by a grinding servitude, and their very existence, as a distinct people, brought into imminent jeopardy. But at the period of greatest danger, the Lord showed that 'he remembered his holy covenant.' By this part of sacred history two important lessons are taught us; first, that let the state of the church or of individual believers be as gloomy and disastrous as it may, it becomes them not to fall into despondency or despair, when they remember that their divine Head, who conducts the administration of providence, has said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the one, and that he will make all events, even the most untoward, work together for good to the other. For wise purposes he often appoints seasons of public and private distress to his people, and in long deferring to answer their importunate prayers for deliverance, he may appear to be unmindful of his truth, and to have forgotten to be gracious. But the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, and in his own good time will deliver them, and make even the wrath of man to praise him. This truth is strikingly exemplified in his manner of delivering the Hebrews from the exterminating sword of Pharaoh, as well as of preserving Moses, the appointed instrument of that deliverance. Another important lesson, suggested by this chapter, is, that the most lively faith, both in the general providence or the special promises of God, is not only compatible with a diligent use of lawful means, but will stimulate the believer to a more active and strenuous application to them; and such was the conduct of the pious parents of Moses, and such also should be our conduct. So while we rely wholly on the providence and grace of God, we should remember that we are not to do so as passive, inactive machines; that we are endowed with faculties which we are bound to exercise, and favoured with opportunities and means of growing in knowledge and holiness, which we are assiduously to use for our spiritual improvement. It is only in this way we can receive the blessing of God.

PRAYER.

Our Father who art in heaven, thou art entitled to the reverence, the homage, and the esteem and gratitude of all who draw near thee, for thou art good as well as great, and gracious as well as almighty. Early were we cast on thy care, and no lapse of time, no change of circumstances, have ever found us without the tokens of thy mercy, and forbearance, and love. From day to day thou hast made thy goodness to pass

before us, and supplied us with all that could minister to our comfort and welfare. Often hast thou disappointed our fears; often hast thou exceeded our hopes; often hast thou turned events, apparently the most adverse, into sources of pure enjoyment and permanent benefit, insomuch that there is not an event in our lives, nor an incident in our experience, which may not furnish us with a theme of gratitude and a subject of praise. While we thank thee for the bounties of thy providence, which thou art indiscriminately bestowing upon all, we supplicate those richer and richer blessings which are the special parts of thy favour. We pray that, as we are fallen and guilty creatures, thou wouldst give us the blessedness of those to whom thou impute no iniquity; that as we are polluted by sin, thou wouldst give us clean hearts, and renew our spirits within us; that as we are ignorant, thou wouldst teach us; and weak, thou wouldst uphold us, and give us that true and lively faith by which we shall be united to Christ, as the branch is united to the vine, and obtain the influences of his Holy Spirit to sanctify our nature, so that we may become thy children; may be conformed to thine image, observe thy laws, and live thee in righteousness and holiness all the days of our lives. We thank thee for the mercies of the by-past night, and for the continuance of health of body and soundness of mind. When we mingle with the world, help us to exemplify those principles of love, and those sentiments of duty which, as thy people and the disciples of thy Son, we profess to entertain: to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; and if thou art pleased to visit us with thy trials, to support and comfort our minds with an unwavering faith in thy wise and holy providence, which presides over every event, and will direct all for thine own glory and the good of thy people. Bless this family. May all members be members of the household of faith. Bless our brethren and kinsfolk according to the flesh. May all our friends be thy friends, and heirs of the kingdom which Christ has gone to prepare. Hear these our humble supplications for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRaise—PARAPHRASE XLVII.

SCRIPTURE—MATTHEW XXVIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 2. The descent of the angel was to do honour to Jesus. The terrific splendour of his appearance was intended to make it clearly appear he was more

than man, and also, at the same time, to fill the soldiers' minds with consternation, so that they might flee, and thereby both make way for the departure of Jesus, and the admission of witnesses to examine the tomb. Ver. 10. There is an indescribable beauty and tenderness in the use of the term, 'my brethren,' in this passage. Christ did not say my disciples, but 'my brethren,' to assure them that, though they had forsaken him in his last sufferings, he had not altered in affection towards them. Having loved them from the beginning, he loved them to the end. Ver. 13. The story which the soldiers, at the instigation of the chief priests, engaged to palm upon the world, carried absurdity upon the face of it. For, not to speak of the improbability of a whole band of sentinels falling asleep at their post, or any Roman soldiers admitting their having committed a trespass which would have endangered their lives, how could they know that the disciples took him away, as, by their own admission, they must have been unconscious? and yet this story was the only defence that could be set up by those who denied the resurrection of Christ. Ver. 17. It is wonderful that, with the clear, repeated, and overwhelming testimony of their senses that Jesus stood before them, any were found who doubted. But their doubts having led them to examine more closely and dispassionately the evidence of this remarkable fact, have been overruled by providence for the greater establishment of our faith.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The resurrection of Christ is not only an important fact in his history, and therefore an important doctrine of his religion, but that on which the truth of all the rest is suspended. Without this he could not have established his claim to the character of a true prophet. Without this he could not have endowed his apostles with the divine wisdom and grace by which they were qualified to be the first preachers of the gospel. Without this we could have had no evidence that his atonement was accepted, and could have founded no expectations on Jesus, more than on any other man who was distinguished for wisdom and virtue; and accordingly the apostle Paul pronounces it to be the corner-stone of his religion. If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain. Without this, in short, all that preceded it in his character and life would have been of no avail to us. We could not have obtained the blessings of his purchase, had he not risen again to apply, by his Spirit and intercession, the merits of his death to us. A fact, therefore, of such importance to the truth of the gospel, and to the faith and hope of Christians, required to be established by evidence of no vague or doubtful character. Accordingly the historian tells us that he showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, at times so numerous and in ways so diversified, that it may be justly affirmed, there is no event in the history of the world more clearly and satisfactorily proved. And therefore we have great reason to join in the grateful exclamation of the apostle Peter, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope'

the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance uncorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

PRAYER.

O Lord, in presenting ourselves this evening at thy throne of grace, we acknowledge ourselves altogether unworthy of so inestimable a privilege and so distinguished an honour. We cannot look up to thee, much less expect any favour or blessing at thy hand, from any claims we have established on thy regard; and when we contemplate thy character, in all its majesty and holiness, or contrast ourselves with the purity of thy law, we have great reason to be dismayed at the recollection of those sins by which we have provoked thy displeasure and alienated thee from us. It is only when we regard thee as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we have confidence in approaching thee. We rejoice that through him we can not only raise our hearts, and contemplate thy glorious majesty, without slavish fear, but entertain the hope of obtaining every necessary blessing, if we only ask them in the name of him who has merited them all by his death, and is now become our advocate with the Father, interceding that we may have them. Help us, then, to exercise a habitual and lively faith in his merits, to which we owe all the privileges we now enjoy, and all that we hope hereafter to be; in his death, by which he has made a full and satisfactory atonement for our sins; and in his resurrection, which affords the strongest grounds for placing our hope on him, for that eternal inheritance which he has purchased for us by his blood, and for all things necessary to prepare and qualify us for it. And while we trust in his righteousness to justify us, and in his Spirit to sanctify us, may we ever live as the children of such unspeakable mercies, conforming ourselves in all respects to thy will, and to the perfect example of our divine Redeemer; so that as he died on the cross, we may die unto sin, and as he rose again from the grave, we may rise to newness of life; a life in which all the graces and virtues of his character may shine; and may it be our daily study and aim to advance thy glory. Pardon wherever we may have come short of this end, during the day that is now ended. Accept of our united acknowledgments for the continuance of our temporal comforts and social enjoyments. Extend the shield of thy protection over us during the silent watches of the night. Give us such repose as may restore us, with renovated energy, to the duties of another day. And to thy name, through Christ, be everlasting praise. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 23—27.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS III.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 2. He who in this verse is styled 'the Angel of the Lord,' is in the 4th and 6th verses called expressly 'the Lord,' or Jehovah, 'and God;' and if there be any meaning in language, and any credit to be attached to the scriptures, this must be considered as the testimony of inspiration to the perfect equality and identity of the Son with the Father. The Lord appeared 'in a flame of fire,' which may denote that God is both holy and just. And the miraculous preservation of the bush from the natural effects of the fire, indicated, that not only Israel, the people of God, would be divinely protected and delivered amid the persecution of all their enemies; but that the church in all ages would be so encompassed 'with God's favour as with a shield,' that, 'the gates of hell would not prevail against it.' Ver. 5. Putting off shoes, has from time immemorial been an expression of respect and reverence in the East. Ver. 14. 'I am that I am,' is a mode of speech denoting self-existence; and simple as it is, is the strongest that can be employed to describe the infinite superiority of Jehovah above all 'that are called gods.' Ver. 22. The word translated 'borrow,' signifies simply to 'request.' The Egyptians were deeply in the debt of the Hebrews, and as that people would not be persuaded, by considerations of justice, to give them what was due, the Lord would inspire them with such terror, that they would gladly part with their most valuable effects; and thus He who is the sovereign Disposer of all, provided his people with necessities for their journey.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How much soever Moses was skilled in the learning of the Egyptians, he required qualifications for the important office to which the Lord had destined him. In the peaceful solitudes of Midian he continued for a long series of years, during which, doubtless, he was, by habitual communion with God, and his own heart, improving himself in faith and piety, and thereby in the way of being prepared for the high and difficult services he was afterwards to render to the ancient church. It was thus too, that a greater than Moses prepared himself for his peculiar work, by retiring to meditate and pray on the eve of entering on his public ministry; and from this conduct of Him who gave us in all things an example that we should follow his steps, we learn that it is our duty, as servants of God, before engaging in any important duties, whether in the church or in the world, to betake ourselves to meditation and prayer.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most gracious Father! Thou hast made another day to dawn upon us, and given us the comfortable prospect of the continuance of life and all the varied blessings by which it is sweetened. While we express in words our lively gratitude for that and every

gift of thy bountiful providence, we pray that thou wouldst enable us to evince that gratitude by the cheerful obedience of our hearts and lives; and, while thou art addressing us by every motive that can influence the human mind; beseeching us by thy mercies, constraining us by thy love, alluring us by thy promises, and persuading us by thy terrors, may we yield thee that love and service which by the law both of nature and grace we are bound to give. Thou hast formed us with a capacity of loving and serving thee. But alas! we have not loved and served thee as purely, and constantly, and supremely as we ought to have done. Though we may not have bowed the knee to graven images, or worshipped in the temple of those that by nature are no gods, we have often given our hearts and affections to other objects than to thee, and have thus violated the first precept of thy law, which requires us to have no other gods before thee. Pardon our sins both of omission and commission; enable and dispose us henceforth to love thee with pure hearts fervently, for the divine excellencies of thy character, and for the manifold tokens of thy kindness, especially for thy kindness towards us in Christ Jesus, and from a firm and enlightened persuasion that thy service is the only reasonable, and free, and happy service; to resolve that whatever others around us may do, as for us, we shall serve the Lord. Confirm and establish us in this resolution; and as we know from painful experience, that we are too apt to fall into sin in spite of what we know to be our interest and duty, we pray that thou wouldst strengthen us with all might by thy Spirit, in the inward man, and animate us by that faith which overcometh the world, the flesh and the devil, and which will keep us steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Prepare us for all that is before us in the course of this day; amid all the scenes and duties to which we may be called, may we carry about with us a sense of thy presence, and of the relations in which we stand to thee, and be enabled to live to thy glory. In any trials which may be appointed to us, help us to manifest the spirit and temper of the disciples of Christ; to endure as seeing thee who art invisible; to have our affections crucified unto the world, and the world unto us; and to pass through all its progressive stages as strangers and pilgrims who are seeking a better country, that is, a heavenly. Bless all whom we are bound by natural or Christian affection, to remember at thy throne of grace. Be a sun and shield unto them; give them grace and glory,

and withhold no good thing from them which thou knowest they need. Be gracious to every member of this family. Let thy presence go with us wherever we go, and thy blessing rest on us wherever we dwell, all which we ask and hope to receive through Christ. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXXIX.

SCRIPTURE—MARK I.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1. It is generally allowed that Mark wrote after, and had seen the gospel of Matthew. This may account for his passing over every thing relating to the birth, family and early years of Jesus, and beginning his history with the preaching of the Baptist, as that was really the preparation and commencement of the gospel dispensation which the Son of God introduced. Ver. 9. All the prophets, priests and kings of the old dispensation, were consecrated to their office by being anointed with oil; and hence, as Jesus was to fill these offices as our Mediator, it became him to be set apart to his peculiar duties by the effusion of the Spirit, of which the sacred oil was merely an emblem; his baptism then, which he submitted to merely 'to fulfil all righteousness,' was his solemn inauguration into his office; for then 'the Spirit of the Lord God came upon him,' and 'he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.' Ver. 14. It is remarkable that Jesus did not preach in Galilee till after the Baptist was laid aside from his ministry. To have come at any earlier period, would have distracted the minds of the people between the rival claims of the two preachers, and produced the same lamentable effects as afterwards were realized in Corinth, when some said, 'I am of Paul; and others, I of Apollos.' But Jesus showed his divine wisdom in postponing his visit to Galilee till John was imprisoned; and then he found the testimonies of the Baptist yet fresh in the minds of the people, who were thereby prepared to receive him.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

When the preaching of John, and his own baptism, had paved the way for Jesus publicly assuming the character of Messiah, he entered on his office; and this chapter details many of his proceedings in attestation of the claims he set forth to be 'the prophet that was to come.' No mark of a divine mission more striking and incontrovertible can be given, than that the person pretending to it possesses the power of doing things beyond the reach of human art or power, and of altering the course of nature by a word of his mouth. This evidence Jesus of Nazareth abundantly furnished. But it is of essential importance to bear in mind, that while the miracles which our Lord performed in Galilee proved the divine origin of the gospel, they were selected also with a special view of illustrating its peculiar doctrines. He came

to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins; and he brought with him a pledge that he had power to bestow this invaluable gift. As disease was introduced into the world by sin, so Jesus, by curing all manner of disease, gave assurance that he had power to forgive sins also; and by the easy and instantaneous manner by which he showed that he could cure the most inveterate maladies of the body, he has given a sensible sign, that, as the Physician of souls, he is able to remove the still greater evils of spiritual disease. And as he cast out devils from the bodies of those who were possessed, he has given us, by that means, a palpable demonstration that he will destroy all the works of the devil by that mighty power whereby he is able to subdue even all things to himself. Let us then apply by faith to this divine physician of souls. He still pursues the mighty plan of benevolence he began on earth; and by the energy of his word and Spirit, are his servants healed of all their spiritual diseases.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we would repair this evening to thy throne of grace, to pay thee the worship and homage which it is thy sole prerogative to receive. Thou art entitled to this tribute from us, as well from thy glorious majesty, as thine unwearied goodness to us; and this day which has now closed has added one more to the innumerable claims thou hast to our gratitude and love; for the comforts and blessings thy parental care has bestowed on us, ever since we had a being, where shall we begin, or where shall we end, if we attempt to enumerate the praises of the Lord! Though we should speak with the tongue of men and of angels, yet where could we find terms in which we could adequately express the riches of thy favour? Even eternity itself would be too brief a span to utter abundantly the memory of thy great goodness. We would especially at this time, express our liveliest thanksgiving for the blessings of that great salvation which thy Son and our Saviour hath procured for us. O may thy Spirit be given to us, whose province it is to take of the things of Christ, and show them to our souls, that he may lead us to repose unwavering confidence in the author and finisher of our faith; inspire us with gratitude for his generous and divine love in giving himself for us; and convince us, from experience, that there is no sin, however deep its dye, which he is not able to remove; no fear, however desponding, which he cannot dispel, and no spiritual malady, however inveterate, for which he has not an adequate remedy. Thus let us become partakers of that peace and joy which flow from believing; and realize the blessedness of that man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered, and to whom thou imputeest no iniquity. May we deem the past part

of our life as more than sufficient to have wrought the will of the flesh; and may it henceforth be our daily prayer, and the constant aim and endeavour of our lives, to be growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour; to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, that thus we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and show forth the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. To thee, who never sleepest nor sleepest, we commit our bodies and souls this night. Let thy blessing and protection be extended to all in whom we are interested, and let our persons and services meet with acceptance, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXII. 5.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS IV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The acknowledgments by Moses, ver. 1, 10. of his own insufficiency for the task assigned him, remind us of our insufficiency for the work which God has given us to do; but the ample means for the accomplishment of his purpose furnished by the Almighty, to the messenger whom he sent to his afflicted people, point to that sufficiency which alike in his case and in ours, is of God, and of God only. Throughout the greater part of this chapter, and especially in ver. 5, 8. our attention is directed to miracles as a proof that God is with them who work them, and sanctions what they teach. A miracle, in the common sense of the word, is an exercise by man of greater power than is possessed by him in the ordinary course of nature; and unless on the supposition of intentional deception on the part of the superior being who furnishes him with that power, (which as regards the Almighty is utterly absurd), cannot be viewed otherwise than as a sign of that superior Being's approbation of the instructions promulgated by the person exercising it. A miracle is, in fact, an affirmative reply given by God to an appeal made to him. It is not meant to be asserted that every thing which is beyond the power of man, is necessarily the direct work of the Almighty; for we have the authority of scripture itself, that there are both good and evil beings, superior in point of power to man, but inferior in that respect to God, by whom supernatural deeds may be, and have been, performed in the world. Such exercises of power by the former, may be directly employed by God for the accomplishment of his purposes; and in that case, amount to the same thing as if they proceeded immediately from his hand; and by the latter may be permitted by him for some good end, but in no instance (under his ever watchful and all-

pervading providence) in such a way as to give any countenance to that which is not truth. In the few instances in which he has allowed such an attempt to manifest itself, as in the case of the Egyptian magicians, overpowering evidence on the opposite side has not been wanting. From all this the conclusion is, that when a supernatural act stands alone, inasmuch as it either proceeds directly from God, or is under his control and direction, it is to be regarded as a certain proof that he is with the person who exhibits it as such; and that when there is contending and contradictory evidence of this description, the preponderance on the side of truth is always such as to be abundantly manifest to the candid and enlightened mind. In ver. 21. the Almighty states his determination to harden Pharaoh's heart; not however by any direct evil influence, for in this sense God tempteth not any man, but by withholding the free gift of his grace; in which sense, whom he will he hardeneth. This he does, however, not capriciously, but in accordance with those principles of rectitude which he has implanted in the human mind, and which are based on eternal and unchangeable truth. This accordance we are sometimes permitted in so far to see, as in the case of Pharaoh, who had persevered in so inexcusable a course of iniquity, that the Spirit of God no longer strove with him.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Amidst the many trials and temptations of life, let us never go forth leaning on our own strength; and as the Almighty gives no command which he is not likewise ready to give the means of executing, let us both place unlimited trust in him, and also remember that we shall be utterly inexcusable if we fall short of his requirements. The obvious connection of ver. 24. with the two succeeding verses, seems to indicate that the sin for which God was angry with Moses, arose partly at least from an improper compliance with the wishes of his wife; let the word of the Lord then be the only rule of our conduct. At the same time, domestic love is the express command of our heavenly Father, and mutual concessions, so far as wisdom and duty permit, are the bond of peace and the will of God regarding us.

PRAYER.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath visited us in our house of bondage, and hath remembered us in our low and lost estate. When we had forsaken thy law and disregarded thy commandments, when we had broken thy covenant and forfeited all claim to eternal life, when we were sunk in sin, in misery and in death, when we were utterly helpless, when sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, thou didst so love the world, as to give thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish but have everlasting life. What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits? Alas, O Lord, what have we rendered? We bow before thee in the dust. God be merciful unto us

sinner. Measure not thy mercy by our merits, but look upon us in the face of thine Anointed Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief. Enable us to give to every one that asketh us a reason for the hope that is in us; and may our faith, founded on the evidences which thou hast set before us, and ingrafted in our souls by thy Spirit, purify our hearts and overcome the temptations of the world. Let not our perverseness and ingratitude provoke thee to abandon us to our own devices. Cast us not away from thy presence. Take not thy Holy Spirit from us. Be thou the guide of all our actions, and our protector in all our dangers. So conduct and support us amidst all the changes and varieties of this uncertain state, that no prosperity may make us forget thee who art the author of it, and no adversity may make us murmur against thy goodness. May no prospect of worldly advantage, nor any dread of worldly loss, ever lead us to swerve from thy holy commandments; but may our conversation in all things be such as becometh the gospel. Teach us so to watch over our ways, that temptation may never be able to surprise us, and enable us so to control our passions and affections, that they may never obtain the dominion over us. May we live in thy fear that we may die in thy favour; that when the dust shall return to the earth as it was, the spirit may return unto God who gave it. All that we ask is for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXX. 3.

SCRIPTURE—MARK II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 5—12. The history of the cure of the man who was sick of the palsy is a strong confirmation of the more direct and express assertions of our Lord's divinity contained in scripture. Reason and revelation concur in assigning to God, the exclusive right to forgive sins. It is true indeed that God may make known to any of his children that he sees fit, his mind concerning forgiveness, not only in general, but as regards the case of individuals, and may empower them to declare what he has thus made known to them. It seems a doubtful point whether and how far this power was communicated to the apostles. But the words of our Saviour in this place, considered even simply in themselves, seem to assert a right of forgiving sins inherent in himself. It is certain, from the context, that they were understood in this sense by those who heard him; and, instead of contradicting their view of the matter, he wrought a miracle in order to confirm it, and that too in such a way as to leave uncontroverted their

belief that none but the Almighty could forgive sins. Ver. 18—22. The scriptures recognise the propriety of suiting our conduct to circumstances, where it can be done without the sacrifice of principle; so that that may be becoming in one man, or under one set of circumstances, which would be unbecoming in another man, or under another set of circumstances. Ver. 24. It was not because the disciples plucked a few ears of corn that the Pharisees found fault with them, for this, under the Jewish dispensation, was expressly sanctioned by the proprietor of all things, although no such license has been extended to us; but it was because they did it on the sabbath-day that these formalists blamed them. Ver. 25—27. Our Lord teaches them (illustrating what he said by an example) that the sabbath-day and the other institutions of the law, were designed as a means to an end; that they were valuable only in so far as they promoted the performance of natural and spiritual duty, and that where they either failed to produce this effect, or had a tendency to prevent it, a strict adherence to the letter of them was worse than useless. Although the conduct which our Lord on this occasion sanctioned in his disciples, needed not such a defence, he adds, ver. 28. that as he himself instituted the sabbath, he had also the power to set aside whatever circumstances were merely positive in the institution, whenever he saw fit. Lest this should be misunderstood, we may remark that the commandment regarding the sabbath, enjoins both a moral and a positive duty. The moral duty is to worship God; the positive is to set apart every seventh day more especially for that purpose, and it is the latter and not the former, with which our Lord asserts a right of dispensing.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

When we reflect on the incarnation of the eternal Son of God, how clear is the inference that we have nothing to fear if we embrace so great salvation, and that it is utterly impossible to escape if we neglect it. In how striking a view does it exhibit the enormity of sin, and how strongly does it urge us, by the motives both of love and of fear, to detest and avoid it. In regard to the sabbath, whilst we avoid superstitious notions, and a formal and hypocritical observance of it, let us remember that it was instituted by God and was made for man, and that it is both our sacred duty and our true interest faithfully to keep it holy. Let us guard against the delusion, that it existed only as a part of the Jewish dispensation, and consequently ceased with that dispensation. It existed from the beginning of the world, and shall continue until the end of it; until the termination of that imperfect state of being, to which alone positive institutions are adapted, until that which is perfect being come, that which is in part shall be done away.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, in thy favour and love were our first parents created, and dwelt in the ever present light of thy countenance. But man being in honour and happiness did not abide. By the disobedience of one, have many been made sinners, and death and misery have passed

upon all men, because all have sinned. But as thou saidst in the beginning, Let there be light, and there was light; so hast thou caused the Sun of righteousness to arise, and enlighten and restore a dark and a ruined world. Although thou art unchangeable in thy nature, and irreconcilable to iniquity, in thine unsearchable wisdom and unbounded goodness, thou hast devised a method so great and so glorious, that even the angels desire to look into it, whereby mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other; whereby thou art just, and yet the justifier of all who believe. Thou hast reconciled a guilty world unto thyself, by the blood of thine only begotten and eternal Son; who, having by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified, returned to his original glory, our all-prevailing intercessor, as he shall be our final judge. Surely he shall guide his flock like a shepherd; his grace is sufficient for all who put their trust in him. He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear; but will, with the temptation, make also a way to escape. In the depths of sorrow, degradation and sin, and in the region and shadow of death, we have heard the glad tidings of salvation; and his invitation to all who are weary and heavy laden is, Come unto me, and I will give you rest. God forbid that it should be our condemnation, that light hath come into the world, and that we have loved darkness rather than the light, because our deeds are evil. Being justified by faith, may we have peace with thee our God, through our Lord and Saviour; and as we have named the name of Christ, may we be enabled by thy grace to depart from iniquity. Teach us to regard ourselves as no longer our own, but bought with a price; and ever to keep in remembrance, that thou hast appointed a day, in which thou wilt judge the world in righteousness, when every work shall be brought into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Sanctify to our spiritual improvement, all the ordinances of thine appointment, and may the happy influence of a due attention to the means of grace, appear in the peaceable fruits of holiness and integrity. Keep us and ours this night, and for ever, under the shadow of thine Almighty wings, and grant an answer in peace to all our requests, for the sake of our Saviour. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLV. 17.

SCRIPTURE—Exodus v.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The contents of ver. 1—3. may, to the careless reader, seem a deception; but this is not to be confounded with a case in which one step, which we have a right to take, or which we think will meet with no opposition, is taken, ostensibly as all that we mean to do, but in reality as a means of taking another step, which is beyond our right, or which we think will be opposed. The Lord and proprietor of all things had a perfect right, whenever he saw fit, to accomplish his ultimate intentions in regard to the children of Israel, and to him the opposition of Pharaoh was as nothing. But, without entering into the question, whether this alone amounts to a complete vindication of the ways of God in this matter, (with all humility be such an expression used), we would add, that had the indulgence here demanded been granted by Pharaoh, and a corresponding relaxation of his severity in other respects taken place, the final departure of the Israelites might have for a season been delayed; nor is it any objection to this view of the case, that the Almighty had already arranged the method of their entire and immediate deliverance, and had in so far intimated it to Moses, for he saw the end from the beginning, and knew that the proposal made to Pharaoh would be rejected. This principle, in fact, pervades the whole scripture history; and every objection being thus removed, we find, in the case now before us, a remarkable instance of the goodness of God, in putting Pharaoh to no more severe a test, and in affording him an opportunity, at so small a sacrifice, of averting the calamities which threatened him. Ver. 4—9. Unimproved advantages are a sure means of hardening our hearts. Ver. 10—14. The deepest affliction often (although not necessarily) goes before the greatest deliverance. Ver. 15—18. How much better a master is God than man, the one ever having a regard to the best interests of his creatures, the other actuated often by mere caprice, and often even by passion and malevolence. Ver. 19—23. The conduct neither of the officers nor of Moses can be fully vindicated.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

From the apparent difficulties which ver. 1—3. present, and yet the natural and easy explanation of which it admits, we ought to learn not rashly to harbour in our minds doubts and objections against any part of the word of God. We ought to wonder that we are not more frequently unable to give complete solutions of difficulties, when we remember how far above the range of ordinary matters are the subjects with which the scriptures are conversant, how very briefly events are often related, and how much brevity tends to obscurity; when we remember, farther, that the contents of the word of God are frequently in the shape of indirect allusions, which of necessity are not so plain as direct statements; that the Old Testament, more particularly, was written in a very distant age and country, with

reference to a very different state of manners and religion from the present, and in a language which has, for very many generations, ceased to be either spoken or written. The other practical inferences we leave to the reader's own reflections.

PRAYER.

For ever praised and adored be that goodness which hath not, long ere now, cut us off in the midst of our sins, and consigned us to that dismal abode where God hath forgotten to be gracious, but which even now is inviting us, in the gospel of reconciliation, to return to the paths of holiness and peace. O Lord, may thy Holy Spirit prepare our hearts to receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which alone is able to make us wise unto salvation. In that fountain which thou hast opened to the house of David, do thou wash us thoroughly from our iniquities, and cleanse us from our sins. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps; do thou, O Lord, who seest the end from the beginning, lead us in the way everlasting. As strangers and pilgrims upon earth, may our conversation be in heaven. There may our treasure be; there may our hearts be also. We commit our ways unto thee, do thou bring them to pass in righteousness, and by whatever means may seem good unto thee, keep us from falling, and at last present us faultless before the presence of thy glory, with exceeding joy. Deny us what blessings thou wilt, but deny us not life eternal. We desire to submit with supreme resignation to whatever afflictions thou, in thine infinite wisdom and goodness, mayest see to be necessary for our salvation, and we leave all our concerns, with perfect confidence, to thy disposal, sensible that thou, who sparedst not thine own Son, but didst deliver him up to death for us all, wilt, with him, also freely give us all things. Withdraw our affections more and more from the things of time. Convinced of the uncertainty of every earthly blessing, seeing that we have nothing in this life which we can truly call our own; that our friends are constantly disappearing from around us; that the objects of our wishes are daily vanishing from before our eyes, we pray, almighty God, that thou wilt enable us to fix our desires on hopes which shall not be disappointed, on joys which are beyond the reach of alloy or uncertainty. Extend, we beseech thee, to the whole human race the same blessings which we have solicited for ourselves. We entreat thee, in an especial manner, in behalf of our own friends and relations. Convert the unconverted here and throughout the world; arouse secure and careless sinners, and build up saints more and more in their most holy faith.

And all things that are expedient for ourselves and for others, both for time and for eternity, we beg of thee, our heavenly Father, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI.

SCRIPTURE—MARK III.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 6. Wickedness, self-sufficiency, and prejudice will resist any means of conviction. Ver. 11. There are evil spirits who possess a greater degree of mere intelligence than man, but how utterly ineffectual for good is mere unsanctified knowledge. That our Saviour's hour was not yet come, explains the first part of ver. 7, 12. Ver. 15. Our Lord furnished the apostles with the power of exhibiting the very same evidences of their divine mission which attested his own. This shows the absurdity of drawing the slightest distinction, in regard to their authority, between his instructions and theirs, whether contained in their discourses or epistles. Ver. 19. Judas probably was not, at this time, an openly profane man, else our Lord most likely would not have selected him; for had he done so, his example would not have been calculated for our imitation, and the outward wickedness of such an instructor, whatever proof he might have exhibited of his mission, would have put the belief of his hearers to too severe a test. But our Saviour knew his inward depravity, and the manner in which it would afterwards manifest itself, and (among other reasons which have been pointed out) he wished to have such a one much in his presence, as a security to our minds against deception, and to employ him in the work of the ministry, to prove that its efficacy is not destroyed by the unworthiness of its outward instruments. Ver. 22—27. In regard to admitting that evil spirits have been permitted to manifest greater powers than are possessed by man, (see remarks on Exod. iv.), the nature of the supernatural works here referred to, and more particularly the object for which they were exhibited, sufficiently prove that they were not to be traced to such an influence. Ver. 28, 29. The sin alluded to seems obviously to be failing to recognise, appreciate, and seek after, despising, and consequently not obtaining, the grace of the Holy Spirit, through which alone we can have faith in Christ, which is the only means of salvation. This explanation is borne out by the context; it is the only one which is reconcilable with the fact that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and, not to mention other arguments, it derives important confirmation from our Lord's farewell address to his disciples, in which he represents the gift of the Holy Ghost as more essential to their best interests than his own personal presence. Ver. 31—35. How close and endearing is the relation which subsists between Christ and his true followers?

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let the wicked and unbelieving reflect that a time

is coming when, like the unclean spirits, they shall be compelled to confess that Christ is the Lord, and shall tremble in his presence. Warned and instructed by the words of our Saviour, let us venerate and adore the Holy Spirit, and earnestly desire his sanctifying influences to guide us into all truth, and let us in the way everlasting. To the timid and depending we would say, that the vague fears and doubts which they are apt to entertain on this subject, are in themselves a proof that this sin is far from them. What they stand in need of is not a more willing heart, but a better instructed mind, and he who knows also pities their infirmities, and regards them as his brother, and sister, and mother.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, we would approach thy footstool in the name of Christ, for we feel that thy mercy and the merits of our Saviour on which all our hopes depend. We throw ourselves on thy unbounded goodness. We acknowledge our need of a Redeemer. We look up from the depths of sin and of misery to thy throne of grace. We tremble when we anticipate thy righteous tribunal. Gracious God, in judgment remember mercy. We have no merit of our own to plead before thee; may the righteousness of Christ be imputed unto us. We have no sacrifice to offer unto thee; may the sufferings of our Saviour be accepted as the price of our salvation. God forbid that we should do despite unto the Spirit of thy grace, but may the Holy Ghost reign in our hearts, renew our nature, sanctify our lives, enable us to obey thy commandments, and seal our souls to the day of redemption. May our experience of the sad consequences of sin, of the utter disproportion between its transitory and uncertain rewards, and its lasting and certain punishments, lead us in the future, with undeviating consistency, to follow after that godliness which hath the promise of life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. May past errors lead us to distrust ourselves; may we think upon our former ways, and make it our constant prayer that our sufficiency may be of thee, the Lord. Enable us to be circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time. Seeing that there is no work or device in the grave, whither we are all hastening, may we not be slothful in business, but diligent in spirit, serving thee, our God. May we walk in the ways of the righteous, that our life may be like his; that the king of glory may to us be a messenger of peace; that the night of death may be but the dawn of an eternal morn, and the grave but the entrance to a new world, where we shall be before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. Enable us to perform aright, in our response

sations, our duty to our brethren of mankind. Our hearts' desire and prayer unto thee, in their behalf, is that they may be saved. We commend especially, to thy mercy and saving kindness, those who are near and dear to us. Do for them exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think; and, none found wanting, may we all meet at last in the kingdom of heaven, and be for ever with the Lord. We offer up all our petitions in the name of him who hath taught us thus to address thee, Our Father, &c.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRaise—PSALM XXVIII. 7.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS VII.

REMARKS.

We find in the end of the preceding chapter, that notwithstanding all the signal marks of God's presence and favour to Moses, he is still distrustful and discouraged. His great error and sin lay in his looking to himself at all in the matter, as by any possibility able to accomplish the great work to which God had called him. It is plain that his very distrust and fears, as to his own capabilities to appear before Pharaoh and assert the deliverance of his people, arose from the idea still clinging to him, that the work was to be accomplished by human power; an idea which, if he had renounced as he ought, his scruples should have vanished. Instead of asking, 'How shall Pharaoh hearken unto me?' he should have remembered that it was not his own message, but God's, he was called to deliver, and that the work was to be done, 'not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.' God, who was suffering to us-ward, still bore with his fearful servant, and reminds him that it was not he that was to speak to Pharaoh; that he was, in this case, to be as a God, or rather, perhaps, God, that is, in his place, or clothed with the authority and commission of God to Pharaoh, and therefore he need have under no concern about the matter. The cause and the issue were God's, and he would vindicate his own power and authority over the proud monarch of Egypt, and constrain him to bow. Yet, that the work of his servant might not be too severely tried, God reminds him that he had given him the aid of his brother, who should utter the words with requisite dignity and grace. How gracious and descending is our heavenly Father, in accommodating himself and his dealings even to the weaknesses of his people. Thus hath he provided a Saviour, who is one of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, not named to call us brethren, and touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Thanks be to God for his precious gift. Moses has now nothing to do but to declare the command of God to Aaron, and Aaron will declare it to the monarch. He is warned, however, that he must not, in the first instance, expect success; that Pharaoh's heart would

still be hardened, but the issue would be a greater display of God's power and glory in the sight of the nations, in the deliverance of Israel. Ver. 3, 4. See remarks on Exod. x. for fuller explanation. It is thus, by the judgments which he executeth, that God manifests his supremacy over the highest. Moses could no longer resist. He and Aaron did as they were commanded. Observe their ages, noted in ver. 7. God chose two men, venerable for their years, and on whose lips wisdom might seem suitable, and a message from God to a proud and imperious monarch might come commended by the voice of gravity and experience. There are certain things which 'even nature herself teaches' to be becoming. Let us not, therefore, despise the ordinary fitness of human conditions and relations, even in the discharge of religious duties. Let us learn also, from the age of Moses and Aaron, that it may please God to lead his servants through a long course of trial and training, before he judge them meet to be honoured in his service, and to wait patiently the Lord's time.

God knew that the authority of Moses and Aaron would be challenged. It was right that Pharaoh should have evidence that they spake in the name of God, and though he would not yield to it, it is given. Ver. 8—10. A miracle is a work either above or contrary to the ordinary laws of nature, by which we learn that he who performs it is invested with an authority and power above nature; in other words, with that of God. We hold, then, a real miracle to be absolute proof of a divine commission, and by consequence it cannot be performed in support of falsehood. If it could, there could be no certain evidence from miracles for a divine commission. Though an undeniable miracle was wrought, Pharaoh quieted his fears by the imitations of the magicians. Whatever the magicians did, it was by their *enchantments*; their tricks and juggles, which they practised so long as the miracles were of such a kind as they could imitate on a small scale, and thereafter they ceased. These remarks apply to what is related ver. 14—24. It is plainly here affirmed that there was such a miracle wrought as that Pharaoh might know that he who commanded him to let the people go was Jehovah, (ver. 17.) which could not have been the case, if the magicians had done the same. Let it be observed, that any apology for a miracle would be enough to a man in Pharaoh's disposition of mind to make him resist the authority of Moses. 1. Let us beware of resisting the evidence of God's word to our own destruction. 2. Let us adore the condescension of God in assuring our hearts in the discharge of duty. 3. Beware of being hardened in prosperous wickedness, and be thankful in a humble condition. 4. God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, and his counsel shall stand.

PRAYER.

O Almighty God, Lord of heaven and earth, we acknowledge thy glorious sovereignty. We own thy power, wisdom, justice, and holiness. We confess that we are nothing, that we know nothing, and can do nothing; and yet we have rebelled against thee. We lift up our hearts against thee, the most high God, and too of

shut our eyes to the manifest displays of thy presence, perfections, and agency. We have too often refused to acknowledge thine authority, and hardened our necks against God. O how wondrous thy long-suffering. How great thy forbearance with the impiety and high-mindedness of the worms of the dust. But thou wilt not always strive. Thou wilt not always be mocked. Thou wilt cause thyself to be known by the judgments which thou wilt execute against the proud and the rebellious. We are by nature such. But, O Lord, deal not with us as we have sinned. Thou hast not yet done so, but hast remembered mercy for us. Thou hast had compassion on us; thou hast found out a ransom, a glorious remedy for our condition. Thou hast not sent thy Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Lord, let us not receive the grace of God in vain. Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief. Bring us by thine almighty Spirit into subjection to the obedience of Christ. Teach us simple submission to thy will. Save us from distrust. When thou commandest may we obey in the strength of the Lord. Help us to wait with patience thy time, and to follow the leadings of thy providence, as thou knowest the end from the beginning, and we are but of yesterday, and know nothing. Preserve us from all hardness of heart and resistance to thy commands, or to the truth of thy word. Lead us in a plain path, and guide us by thy word and Spirit in the way everlasting. We adore thee alike in thy sovereignty and in thy wondrous condescension to our condition; the unspeakably tender grace that, knowing our frame, remembers that we are dust, and has provided a Saviour who, while Christ the Lord, is yet of the seed of Abraham, bone of our bone, and thus a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. To thee, then, we come in his name. O grant us mercy to pardon, and grace to help. As our day is, let, we beseech thee, our strength be. Help us to serve and glorify thee. Supply us with water out of the wells of salvation. Carry us on from strength to strength. Bring us at last perfect before thee in the new Jerusalem. Satisfy us early with thy goodness. Accept of thanksgiving for all past mercies, which we cannot number. This day, which in mercy thou hast brought us to see, surrounded with benefits, be our shield and buckler. Save and help all who are near and dear to us. Keep them and lift them up for ever. Have pity on the distressed. Have mercy upon Zion. O compassionate sinners. Let them be converted

unto thee through all the earth. Take unto thee thy great power and reign. Hear, O Father of mercies, these our prayers, for the sake of him who is our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 11.

SCRIPTURE—MARK IV. 1—20.

REMARKS.

The same parable is given in Matthew and Luke in nearly similar terms, but so varied in some of the circumstances as both to give it fresh interest, and show that there was neither servile copying nor conclusion, but each spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. Our Saviour himself expounds it, and it requires few remarks by way of explanation. One astonished how the multitude did not understand; that even the disciples themselves, those 'who were about him,' and constantly attended him, did not see its full meaning. Ver. 11. But being of a teaching spirit, our Saviour said to them, 'Unto you it is given,' graciously granted, by the Spirit of God (without whom, however obvious, they cannot be spiritually discerned, even when revealed) 'to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God,' those great and glorious truths which have been hid from ages and generations. 'But unto them that are without, that is, to them who were no better than heathen whom the Jews so described as outside the pale of God's vineyard, it was not given, and that for an express but awful purpose, foretold by the prophet Isaiah, that they might be left in that darkness, unbelief, and impenitence which their sensuality, will blindness, and hardness of heart merited and brought upon them, in the just judgment of a holy God, whose warnings and invitations were despised.' Isa. vi. Matth. xiii. 11—17. All which persons most aptly described in this parable, by similitudes which may be easily understood and applied, and which give a striking description of the great majority of the hearers of the gospel, solemnly conveying each and all of us the lesson, 'take heed how ye hear, and enforcing it by the consideration impressed upon us, not only expressly in the word of God, but also intimated in his providence, that 'from him that heareth not'—that improves not his talents, of whatever kind, and especially his spiritual privileges—'from him shall be taken away even that which he hath.' We are encouraged to make this improvement by the last part of the parable intimating to us, that all are not of this sort, and that those who improve the gospel receive blessing from God.

Let us beware of treating lightly the word of the living God; of contemptuously treading it under foot, of making a profession of receiving it with gladness in the day of prosperity, while in the day of adversity we cast it away; or of permitting the engrossing cares of the world, or the stupifying and hardening

gratifications of earthly and sensual appetites and pursuits to debase and make gross the heart, to shut the spiritual eye, render dull the spiritual ear, and utterly destroy the saving effects of the word of God, which is the alone instrument, 'the sword' by which the Spirit of God reaches the conscience and quickens the dead soul, the light by which he reveals the Redeemer, directs the soul to him, sanctifies, comforts, and saves it. Watch and pray for the Spirit of God, that his word may not return unto him void; that it be not to us a savour of death unto death, but of life unto life; and that, watered in our hearts by the dew from on high, it may bring forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we adore thee as the God of our salvation, and in the name of him whom thou hearest always, and in whom thou art always well pleased, do we give thee most humble and hearty thanks, that when darkness had covered the earth, and gross darkness the people, thou didst send forth thy word to lighten them, and great hath been the company of them that published it, that holy men of old make as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and in the last days thou didst speak to men by thy Son from heaven. We rejoice that the day-star from on high hath visited us, that Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness, has arisen with healing under his wings, and that now the light shineth to us who were in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death. O Lord God of hosts, our covenant God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, shine, we beseech thee, into our hearts, to give us the light of his glorious gospel. Reveal thy Son himself in us. Remove the veil that covers our spiritual sight. Grant us, for this end, the Spirit of the Lord, that we may have liberty, and beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. Quicken us by thy word, and we will call upon thy name. Sanctify us by thy truth; thy word is truth. O let it not be to us either as water spilt upon the ground, that cannot be gathered up again, or as seed sown on a hard, neglected, unfruitful soil, which bringeth forth no fruit to perfection, and is speedily carried away or destroyed. O let it not be to our condemnation that light hath come into the world, and that we have loved darkness rather than light, because our deeds were evil. Let us not harden our hearts and provoke the Lord to give us over to strong delusion, so as that we should either reject or disobey thy truth, hold it in unrighteousness, or believe a lie; for no lie is of the truth, or can sanctify or save our souls.

Help us to remember the words of him who came in thy name to save us, and gave himself for us, Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. Revive and quicken us. O thou who hast promised to pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground, be as the dew unto Israel, that we may grow in thy service as the lily, and cast forth our roots as Lebanon, that our branches of righteousness may spread, and our branches of holiness may be as the olive-tree, and the odour of our good name as Lebanon. May we revive as the corn and grow as the vine. For this purpose may we abide in Christ, without whom we can do nothing; and as we have received so let us walk in him. Let thy statutes be our songs in the house of our pilgrimage. Lead us in the way of thy testimonies, that our footsteps may not slide; and though it may be through a way that we have not known, bring us, we pray thee, to the city of habitation. We thank thee for the mercies of this week. They have been many and precious. Bless to us its trials; forgive its sins, which are great. Wash them away in that blood which cleanseth from all sin. Prepare and solemnize our minds for the duties of the approaching sabbath. If spared in thy mercy to enter upon them, may we rise refreshed with needful rest, animated with gratitude, in the gladness of thy nation, and prepared to spend in the Spirit the Lord's day. Be gracious, O God, to all who are near and dear to us. Let the name of the God of Jacob defend them, and let him that dwelt in the bush, the angel Jehovah, who redeems his servants from all evil, and hath fed and led them all their life long in all generations, be with them to keep them in all their ways, and to preserve them to the day of redemption. Let thy name be known throughout all the earth, and thy saving health to all nations. Bless and preserve thy servants who go forth in the Spirit of Christ to seek the lost. Sustain their souls. Give them souls for their hire. Bless thy Zion, even the whole Israel of God. Comfort the afflicted. Give the peace of thy chosen to mourners in Zion. Be our God even unto death, and at last our exceeding great reward. Into thy hands we commend ourselves, and all in whom we are interested, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EIGHTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXVII. 4.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS XXVI. XXVII.

REMARKS.

PSALM XXVI. How admirable is the consistency of scripture; how splendid and satisfactory the light thus thrown on its divine origin and invariable truth? When the tongue of calumny and the jealousy of power had banished David from the land of his nativity; when there resorted to him the unfortunate, the desperate, and the discontented of his countrymen, when their abode was in the caves of the rocks, or in the fortress reluctantly conceded by the stranger, how powerful were the temptations under which he laboured to follow the practices then and now prevalent amongst those similarly situated. The manners of the times might seem to justify him in returning evil for evil. The habits of the country at that and at the present day would have afforded apology for plundering the helpless traveller, or selling protection for a bribe. The instigation of his reckless followers prompted to these and many other such deeds of violence; and his own human passions bursting forth occasionally, had nearly hurried him on to retaliation of injuries, and commission of wrong. But the man after God's own heart was preserved, through the divine blessing, from thus forfeiting his integrity. He sat not in council with vain persons, and shunned the congregation of evil-doers. He trusted in the Lord, and therefore he did not slide. Hence could he boldly expostulate with Saul, 'What have I done, and what evil is in mine hand? The Lord judge between thee and me.' Thus did he confute the aspersions of his enemies; and thus was he enabled to call on the Lord to judge him, because in these respects he had walked in his integrity; because he had kept the loving-kindness of God before his eyes, and walked in his truth; because he had not gone with dissemblers, nor cast in his lot with the bloody men. He ceased not to love the habitations of the Lord's house, and the place where his honour dwelleth. He was prepared to wash his hands, not in mere external form, but in token that he was innocent of the crimes charged upon him, in hope of one day being restored to the privilege of compassing the altar of the Lord, of publishing in his sanctuary the mercies of the Most High, and telling of all his wondrous works. Happy indeed are they whom his grace thus enables to set the Lord always before them, and under every temptation to hold fast their integrity. Thus, like David, they baffle the malice of the slanderer and live down the calumnies of the evil speaker. Thus may they count on the clouds which now hang over them being in a good time dispelled. Or, if their appointed period of trial should be ordained to last while life endures, theirs is the gracious promise, (Matth. v. 11, 12.) 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely,

for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.'

PSALM XXVII. Long had David stood forth in the front of battle, and often had he triumphed over the foes of his country. Her defender in war, the assertor of her independence, the ruler over her tribes, the author of her civilization, the restorer of her worship, he had every claim on the gratitude and affection of her children. Accordingly, when his strength began to abate, and he had narrowly escaped the sword of his adversary, his men swore unto him, saying, 'Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.' To their request he here declares his cheerful assent. He was content to remain at home, to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. Thence could he look down, in conscious security, on his enemies, now baffled and subdued; and there could he, undisturbed and tranquil, offer, in the divine tabernacle, sacrifices of thanksgiving, and sing praises unto the Lord. Still he felt that the safety of his life, and the continuance of his authority, depended solely on the blessing of heaven. Therefore did his heart say, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' Therefore did he implore the Lord to teach him the right way, and lead him in a plain path. Therefore he fainted not, but believed to see the goodness of God in the land of the living; and hence did he admonish others that they should wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, that so their hearts might be strengthened.

Such is the true believer, the devoted follower of the Son of David. He has his mortal foes to withstand, in the form of corrupt inclination and worldly temptation. Should these assume the form of personal danger or outward suffering, he sinks not into despondency, nor chargeth God foolishly, but submits him to the chastening of the Lord. As he prays that he may not be led into temptation, he avoids exposing himself rashly to those trials in which he sees others fail, those associations which corrupt good manners, those connections and engagements which too often pervert the principles and conduct of professing Christians. But when temptation is unavoidable, when his Master calls him to fight the good fight of faith, he goes forth fearlessly, not in his own strength, but relying on that which is from on high. He is strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and therefore becomes more than a conqueror, through him who loved his people. Still the sanctuary of the most High is his favourite place of resort, and the duties of that sanctuary, his approved means of striving to obtain spiritual strength. He is glad when they say unto him, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.' He delights in holding communion with him who is invisible, and joining with his fellow Christians in pouring forth the tribute of thanksgiving, praise, and reverential supplication before the throne of divine grace, through him whom the Father heareth always. From such exercises he goeth forth, strengthened and encouraged to encounter every trial, and resist every temptation. By the sympathies of such exercises is his heart kindled into warmer affection; and thus is he taught to set th

Lord always before him, assured that they at whose right hand He is, shall not be greatly moved.

PRAYER.

Lord, how lovely is thy dwelling-place, how amiable are the tabernacles of thy grace, how blessed is the man whom thou choosest and makest to approach unto thee. While we give thee glory for all thy Fatherly care and providential goodness, while we praise thee for Jesus Christ, thine unspeakable gift, and for all the benefits of the Redeemer's purchase, we would gratefully remember the provision which thou hast made for our spiritual improvement. Let thy blessing be upon the exercises of this day. May we ever account a day spent in thy courts, better than a thousand wasted in the tents of sin. Enable us to engage in the public duties of this day, refreshed by thy presence, by a recollection of our recent intercourse with thee, and in humble confidence of thy favour and blessing, through our all-sufficient and ever-gracious Saviour. We know not what changes, and trials, and afflictions, are reserved for us in thy unerring wisdom. We desire to commit ourselves without reserve to thy wise and righteous disposal, believing that thou knowest what is good for us, better than we possibly can; and assured that thou makest all things work together for good, to those who are truly thine. We pray that thou, in thy providence, mayest be pleased to spare us those temptations which may be too ensnaring for our watchfulness, or too powerful for our resistance. We pray that when we are tempted, thou mayest be at hand to support and deliver us, to make thy grace sufficient for us, and perfect thy strength in our weakness. And we beseech thee, that in all our ways we may be enabled to acknowledge thee, and that our paths may be directed by thy unerring wisdom. We bless thee, that we have been preserved from evil during the shade of the night now passed; and raised up to the light and the duties of a new day. O be thou graciously pleased to guide us in our going out and our coming in, to deliver us from all evil, and to sanctify all that we do, or that may befall us, day by day, to the praise of thy holy name. Hear, O Lord, and when thou hearest, forgive the imperfection of all our services, and accept of them and of us, in Christ, our only Mediator. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXVIII. 6.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS XXVIII. XXIX.

REMARKS.

PSALM XXVIII. Man is born unto trouble even as the sparks fly upwards. The youth of David was a succession of changes, perils, and wondrous preservations. His middle age was a period of exertion, labour and frequent conflict with foreign and domestic foes. His declining years were embittered by the unnatural rebellion of a darling son, the merited chastisements of divine providence, and the repeated attacks of inveterate foes. Even after he had retired in person from the strife of swords, the events of at least three battles are recorded, in which his faithful defenders had to contend with gigantic champions and numerous enemies. Still the favour of heaven had delivered him from all his dangers, and prolonged the period of his dignity and authority. Therefore his soul is poured forth in fervent and confiding supplication for deliverance from external inroads, from treasonable conspiracy and domestic rebellion; and therefore he blesses the Lord, his strength and his shield, in whom his heart had trusted, and by whom he was helped. For himself, for the hosts of Israel, for their success and the prosperity of his people, he gives all glory to the Almighty, and implores the continuance on their behalf and his own, of his God's heavenly blessing and saving grace. To us belongs the example thus exhibited of resignation to the divine will, under even the severest trials; of trust in the Lord, in prospects apparently most unfavourable; of unwearied application to him for strength in the day of trouble, and deliverance in the hour of peril; of grateful acknowledgment for every benefit which he bestows, and all the success with which he blesses our weak exertions; and above all, of unwearied prayer for the welfare of our Zion, for the prosperity of our native land, and for the preservation and continuance of scriptural faith and undefiled religion among all classes of our countrymen.

PSALM XXIX. Who is he who regardeth not the works of the Lord, neither considereth the operation of his hands? Surely the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge. Or, if the invariable succession, and constant re-appearance of these manifestations of his omnipotence and wisdom, may have so accustomed us to them, that we lose the habit of referring them to their author, are there not occasional displays of his wondrous working, to strike the most thoughtless, and appal the most hardened? Can weak man be unaffected when the tempests level the mightiest of his works; when his boasted navies, with all by whom they are navigated, are overwhelmed in the deep; when the God of glory thundereth with that voice which is powerful and full of majesty; when he breaketh the cedars of Lebanon, and shaketh the wilderness, and divideth the flames of fire. Such elemental tumults were often the instruments of God's providence, in behalf of his people Israel. He rained down great stones

from heaven on the hosts of Canaan, and arrested in their progress the sun and moon, till Joshua had avenged the people on their enemies. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera; and probably the recent occurrence of some such favourable interposition, had at once called forth the gratitude of the psalmist, and encouraged his confidence, that the Lord would continue to give strength, and bless his people with peace. How manifold are the works of God, how unsearchable his counsels, how wondrous his ways! How unspeakably beyond our finding out, are the small portions of his creation which we behold! Who can comprehend the full thunders of his power? Let us then stand in awe before him. Let our hearts be penetrated with the deepest reverence of him, and the most humbling thoughts of ourselves; and let us hold fast our confidence in him who can do for us above what we can ask or think of, through that blessed Redeemer whose cross is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, for our salvation.

PRAYER.

Thou, O Lord, art a God of knowledge, and by thee actions are weighed. No darkness nor shadow of death can conceal from thee any of the works which thou hast made, neither is there any creature that is not manifest in thy sight. To thee are known all the wanderings of our hearts, the idleness of our speech, the sinfulness of our lives. O do thou enable us to look on our thoughts, words, and actions, as tried by the infallible test of thy unerring law. Give us to discern how perverse have been our thoughts, how vain our conversation, how worthless our conduct, how hopeless our state, wert thou to enter with us into judgment. Lead us to that Saviour in whom thou reconcilest sinners to thyself, to that blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel; and fill our hearts with that bitter compunction, that godly sorrow, that humility and contrition, which thou hast declared that in him thou wilt not despise. While it is thy pleasure that we yet tabernacle on earth, we know that we must encounter many trials and temptations. Do thou graciously support and strengthen us under them. Let no danger intimidate, no pleasure allure us into forgetfulness of our God. Save us from being cast down by the evil reports of erring men, or elated by the flattery of human applause, or misled by the fashion of the world, to follow the multitude in doing evil. And let the means of grace which thou hast appointed, be sanctified for our benefit, that we may walk in our integrity, and bless the Lord in the congregation of his people. We would especially acknowledge, with fervent gratitude, the high privilege of a day set apart for thy peculiar service, the blessed rest of thy holy sabbath, the solemn and stated call to withdraw

our thoughts from the engrossing cares and pursuits of a transitory world, and the opportunity this day afforded us of meeting our brethren in the Lord, and uniting our hearts and voices in praise, and thanksgiving, and prayer to him who is the Father and the Maker of us all. O may our services ever find acceptance with thee in Christ Jesus. May the preaching of thy word be blessed of thee as the means of enlightening, comforting, and establishing our hearts in thy truth. May our fellowship in thy public worship unite our hearts in brotherly love; and may our earthly sabbaths be indeed an earnest of that eternal sabbath, where thy servants, assembled before thy throne, shall praise thee for ever and ever. We pray, O Lord, that the blessings of divine truth may be diffused more and more over the face of the earth; that thou mayest prosper the efforts of those who labour according to thy mind and will in this great cause; and that the multitudes of our fellow mortals, who yet lie in spiritual darkness, may have the cloud now encompassing them dispelled by the glorious light of the everlasting gospel. We desire to pour forth our thanksgivings for all the unmerited blessings, spiritual and temporal, which we have this day experienced. We beseech thee to continue to us thy gracious care and inexhaustible bounty, that so we may repose in peace under the shadow of thy almighty wings; may receive, day by day, our daily bread, and be kept by thy mighty power, through faith unto salvation, in Christ our strength and Redeemer. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLV. 17.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS VIII.

REMARKS.

When the Lord poured forth the vials of his wrath on Pharaoh and his people, to compel the release of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, each successive plague was followed by a reluctant and selfish concession, to be soon retracted or evaded. Take away this plague, was the word of the king, and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord; but when he saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart and hearkened not unto them. Under the next infliction, he yielded so far as to say, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land. Nay, farther, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only, ye shall not go very far away; entreat for me. But, when the entreaty was heard, Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go. What was the result? The answer is heard in the cry of misery, ascending from house to

prevailing providence) in such a way as to give any countenance to that which is not truth. In the few instances in which he has allowed such an attempt to manifest itself, as in the case of the Egyptian magicians, overpowering evidence on the opposite side has not been wanting. From all this the conclusion is, that when a supernatural act stands alone, inasmuch as it either proceeds directly from God, or is under his control and direction, it is to be regarded as a certain proof that he is with the person who exhibits it as such; and that when there is contending and contradictory evidence of this description, the preponderance on the side of truth is always such as to be abundantly manifest to the candid and enlightened mind. In ver. 21. the Almighty states his determination to harden Pharaoh's heart; not however by any direct evil influence, for in this sense God tempteth not any man, but by withholding the free gift of his grace; in which sense, whom he will he hardeneth. This he does, however, not capriciously, but in accordance with those principles of rectitude which he has implanted in the human mind, and which are based on eternal and unchangeable truth. This accordance we are sometimes permitted in so far to see, as in the case of Pharaoh, who had persevered in so inexcusable a course of iniquity, that the Spirit of God no longer strove with him.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Amidst the many trials and temptations of life, let us never go forth leaning on our own strength; and as the Almighty gives no command which he is not likewise ready to give the means of executing, let us both place unlimited trust in him, and also remember that we shall be utterly inexcusable if we fall short of his requirements. The obvious connection of ver. 24. with the two succeeding verses, seems to indicate that the sin for which God was angry with Moses, arose partly at least from an improper compliance with the wishes of his wife; let the word of the Lord then be the only rule of our conduct. At the same time, domestic love is the express command of our heavenly Father, and mutual concessions, so far as wisdom and duty permit, are the bond of peace and the will of God regarding us.

PRAYER.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath visited us in our house of bondage, and hath remembered us in our low and lost estate. When we had forsaken thy law and disregarded thy commandments, when we had broken thy covenant and forfeited all claim to eternal life, when we were sunk in sin, in misery and in death, when we were utterly helpless, when sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, thou didst so love the world, as to give thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish but have everlasting life. What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits? Alas, O Lord, what have we rendered? We bow before thee in the dust. God be merciful unto us

sinners. Measure not thy mercy by our merits, but look upon us in the face of thine Anointed Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief. Enable us to give to every one that asketh us a reason for the hope that is in us; and may our faith, founded on the evidences which thou hast set before us, and ingrafted in our souls by thy Spirit, purify our hearts and overcome the temptations of the world. Let not our perverseness and ingratitude provoke thee to abandon us to our own devices. Cast us not away from thy presence. Take not thy Holy Spirit from us. Be thou the guide of all our actions, and our protector in all our dangers. So conduct and support us amidst all the changes and varieties of this uncertain state, that no prosperity may make us forget thee who art the author of it, and no adversity may make us murmur against thy goodness. May no prospect of worldly advantage, nor any dread of worldly loss, ever lead us to swerve from thy holy commandments; but may our conversation in all things be such as becometh the gospel. Teach us so to watch over our ways, that temptation may never be able to surprise us, and enable us so to control our passions and affections, that they may never obtain the dominion over us. May we live in thy fear that we may die in thy favour; that when the dust shall return to the earth as it was, the spirit may return unto God who gave it. All that we ask is for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXX. 3.

SCRIPTURE—MARK II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 5—12. The history of the cure of the man who was sick of the palsy is a strong confirmation of the more direct and express assertions of our Lord's divinity contained in scripture. Reason and revelation concur in assigning to God, the exclusive right to forgive sins. It is true indeed that God may make known to any of his children that he sees fit, his mind concerning forgiveness, not only in general, but as regards the case of individuals, and may empower them to declare what he has thus made known to them. It seems a doubtful point whether and how far this power was communicated to the apostles. But the words of our Saviour in this place, considered even simply in themselves, seem to assert a right of forgiving sins inherent in himself. It is certain, from the context, that they were understood in this sense by those who heard him; and, instead of contradicting their view of the matter, he wrought a miracle in order to confirm it, and that too in such a way as to leave uncontroverted that

another. Take us this night under thy gracious protection. Let no evil come nigh our dwelling. May our rest prove refreshful, and our awaking be with the Lord. And may the remainder of our sojourning here be devoted to thy service, through Christ our Saviour. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCIX.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS IX.

REMARKS.

In this chapter three plagues are recorded, the fifth, sixth, and seventh; the murrain which destroyed the cattle of the Egyptians; boils and blains which tormented their own persons; rain, hail, and fire which desolated the whole land of Egypt. How fruitful of miseries sin is! It is big with plagues and ruin. And they that will not listen to the voice of God directing them what to do, shall listen to it declaring what they must suffer. There are two alternatives, *obedience or punishment*. He that persists in refusing the first, must accept the second.

How abundant was the evidence God granted to Pharaoh! He is informed not only that there will be a grievous distemper among the cattle, but *when* it should take place; and the cattle of the Hebrews is exempt from this plague. So that 'all the beasts that died belonged to the Egyptians,' which is the sense of the 6th verse.

Men are commonly most touched by *personal* calamities; 'all that a man hath will he give for his life.' And God makes the ashes of those furnaces, at which the poor Hebrews had been condemned to burn brick, a plague to torment their cruel masters. The Lord often turns the instrument of oppression into a whip by which the oppressor may be scourged. *Boils and blains* manifested the faith and patience of Job, but the unbelief and obstinacy of the Egyptians. The afflictions of good men make them better, those of bad men commonly render them worse. Deceivers and deceptions can only last for a time. Soon they must condemn themselves, and fly ashamed from before the face of truth. 'The magicians could not stand before Moses.'

Pharaoh is warned of still more plagues and worse. O how foolish to doubt that he who thus plagues him, both can destroy him, and will, unless he repent. Sinners 'pass on, and are punished.' Hail, lightning, and thunder terrify the Egyptians, and ruin Egypt. Yet some of the people of Pharaoh had so much faith in the Lord as to fear him, by which their property was saved. Hence we learn that even in the most abandoned communities there are commonly some who fear the Lord, and also, that no act of faith, how weak soever, is without reward, not of debt but of grace.

The king of Egypt suffered a worse plague than any of the ten calamities that desolated his kingdom, the plague of a *hardened heart*. And as the other plagues were punishments of his wickedness, so was

this also. He raised up himself against the Lord strengthened himself to resist him, and the Lord 'made him stand;' not at once utterly overwhelming him, that the power which Pharaoh braved might be the more clearly displayed, and others might, by his fate, be warned of the sure destruction which await the enemies of God.

Men who shut their eyes are punished with want of light, and with stumbling and falling; they will not see, and God takes from them the light they will not use; they love lies, they covet delusions, and God sends them 'strong delusions to believe a lie.' We must not suppose God first inclined Pharaoh to sin, and then punished him for sinning. 'God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.' James I. But he who cherishes sin is justly punished by the increase of the inclination, and by the fruits of sin, death.

PRAYER.

O Lord God of Israel, who didst perform wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, to make unto thyself a glorious name, and who leddest forth thy people out of that house of bondage, overthrowing their enemies in the Red sea, may thy name be blessed for ever. As thou didst promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so didst thou perform unto their children, for all thy promises are yea and amen. O Lord, we rejoice that out of the Egypt of this sinful world thou hast redeemed thy church, the spiritual Israel, not without wonders and miracles of grace, destroying the power of sin and of death, and giving them the victory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, and liberty to serve the Lord even in the wilderness of this mortal life. O God, who hath kept us to see the light of another day, accept our grateful thanks and praises. May the devil be this day bruised under our feet. May we walk in the Spirit, not fulfilling the deeds of the flesh. And when we see thy hand stretched out to punish them that proudly oppose thee, may we not be high-minded, but fear. O God, deliver us from 'hardness of heart,' from 'a seared conscience,' from blindness of mind. Shine thou into our hearts, giving us the knowledge of thyself in the face of Christ. May we dwell in Goshen, being separated from the world in its pride and unbelief, and separated also from its plagues and miseries. O may we be redeemed from all iniquity, from our vain conversation, from the power of this present world, and may we live under the powers of the world to come. Sanctify us wholly, in spirit, soul, and body. We pray for all men. Bless and enlarge thy church. Be the God of our friends. Reward our benefactors. Forgive our enemies, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM IV. 6.

SCRIPTURE—MARK V. 1—25.

REMARKS.

How fierce and terrible this wretched man had become. The devil makes men a plague to themselves and a terror to others. Where he reigns, fear, and rage, and whatever constitutes hell, hold their empire. The demons acknowledged Christ. So will the most wicked of men do at the day of judgment. But the acknowledgment which is forced is thankless. They deserve no praise who admit what cannot be denied. God and the devil divide the obedience of the rational creation; and God and Satan are not more opposed than are the temper and condition of those whom they respectively actuate. The one party enjoy already some foretaste of heaven, the other forestall the darkness and misery of hell. The devil, the accuser of the brethren, is the destroyer of the creatures. Mischief is his employment and his pleasure; and, if he cannot work his will upon the higher, he will upon the lower, creation. 'Let us enter into the swine, if thou drive us out of the man.' This was the only miracle of a destructive kind which our Lord performed; but, indeed, all he did was to permit the devil to exhibit himself; he only, in this instance, rended the chain of that roaring lion. O Lord, what would become of us, unless thou didst restrain him that goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

But what ails the Gadarenes? One has appeared among them that has turned a monster into a man, having cast the devil out of him. But then he has also destroyed 2000 swine, which were worth a great deal of money. And who can tolerate a Saviour who causes so much loss of property! Alas, how many Gadarenes do we behold among ourselves, men who refuse the spiritual deliverance, and all the riches that Christ bestows, because he plunges some of our temporal riches into the sea. And because they are more concerned about the unrighteous mammon than about the true riches, therefore they beseech Christ to 'depart out of their coasts.'

He that hath known the blessed power of Christ is willing to leave all and follow him. And as his heart is full of gratitude, so his tongue of the praises of the Lord. He tells how great things Jesus had done for him, that other diseased souls may be induced to take the powerful medicines of this great Physician, and be cured of the deadly bite of the old serpent.

PRAYER.

O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hast sent thy dear Son into the world, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life, may we repent and believe the good news of salvation which he brings, and may we be baptized with the Holy Ghost. We are blind, weak, and corrupt, may the Spirit of Jesus Christ enlighten our understandings in the knowledge of him our Saviour. Strengthen us

with all strength, in the inner man; purify us from all our corruptions, and work in us mightily to do thy holy will. Forgive us all our sins, through Jesus Christ, our great high priest, and may we know that our sins are pardoned, for his name's sake. And, O God, enable us to leave all and follow Christ. May we not question, but obey thy will, meekly submitting ourselves to thy gracious and righteous disposal. Lord, sustain us under all trials; purify us by the afflictions thou sendest, and may our faith come out as the fine gold from the furnace. O Lord, may thy kingdom come; may thy will be done by us, as it is done by angels in heaven. May we be kept by them, through faith to salvation. The Lord perfect that which concerneth us. Send forth thy light and truth to every land. Let thy praise be spoken by every tongue; let every knee bow to thee. And to thy name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be endless praise. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 1—6.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS X. XI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

1. When God is said to 'harden the heart' of Pharaoh, we are not for a moment to suppose that he who is the source of all purity, implanted in the mind of the Egyptian monarch a principle of obstinacy in sin, or exerted any positive influence on him in this way; but simply, that he left him to his own heart's lusts, and gave him up to the hardening effects of sin. As Jeremiah is said to have been 'set over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy,' (i. 10.) when the meaning merely is, that he was to foretell such things, so God is said to 'harden' when he simply intimates beforehand that so it shall be, and leaves the sinner to the consequences of his own folly. If you ask a reason for this peculiar phraseology, I would say that it is designed to mark God's absolute and universal supremacy. Even the sins of men, on which, in the inscrutable arrangements of heaven, so much may depend, are not the results of chance, or unknown or unnoticed by Jehovah. They are permitted by him; they are bounded by his boundless sway; and they are even overruled in the issue for the accomplishment of his own glorious ends. 'He maketh even the wrath of man to praise him.' 2. In the account given us (chap. xi.) of the Israelites 'spoiling the Egyptians,' by receiving of them gold, and silver, and other articles of value, the original terms, rendered 'borrowed' and 'lent,' are nearly synonymous with the terms 'asked' and 'gave,' and they by no means convey the idea that the Israelites obtained possession of property, not their own, under

false pretences. God is the sovereign proprietor of all, and says he, 'the silver and the gold are mine.' Long and severely had the Egyptians spoiled the Israelites, and now the property is restored by the supreme owner to its rightful occupants. The Egyptians are, by the judgments of the Lord's hand, 'inclined to grant to Israel whatever they might require; and a portion of the riches of the land of Pharaoh is transferred to other proprietors, by him of whom it has been declared, by inspiration from himself, 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.' 3. When it is said (xi. 8.) that Moses went out from Pharaoh in 'great anger,' we must not interpret it of violent passion, but of that holy indignation against sin which is perfectly consistent with that benignant feeling which breathes in the words of an apostle, 'Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.' Of a greater than either Moses or Paul it is recorded, that on one occasion he looked round on the unbelieving multitude 'with anger; being grieved with the hardness of their hearts.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. In the plagues on Egypt we see so many standing memorials of the greatness of God; the security and happiness of the church; the awful consequences of sin; and the peculiar guilt which attaches to those who 'provoke the Lord to jealousy.' 2. God has a supreme right to demand that the mightiest of the sons of men shall 'humble themselves' before him. This is one great design of his providential dealings with them; and it is at their peril if they obstinately and perseveringly refuse to do so. Of Belshazzar it is specifically recorded, that 'he humbled not his heart before God;' of Nebuchadnezzar, that he prided himself in the survey of his magnificent capital; of Herod, that he 'gave not God the glory;' and Pharaoh, though he seemed to abase himself, was punished for his insincerity. 'God resisteth the proud.' 3. The fact, as here recorded, that Moses, after delivering his solemn message to Pharaoh, 'turned himself and went out' from his presence, telling him also, a short time afterwards, that he would 'see his face no more,' reminds us that there is a period fixed in God's sovereign arrangements, when the time allotted for repentance shall be over; when God shall give up sinners to their own lusts, when conscience shall cease to strive, when 'our day,' shall be past, and 'the things which belong to our peace be for ever hid from our eyes.' What a solemn call to listen to the warning voice, and to improve 'the accepted time, the day of salvation.' 4. Pharaoh was willing that the people should go a certain way into the wilderness, that they might fear God; but he did not wish that they should go forth in a body, with all their children, and without any intention to return. But the absolute folly of such a partial surrender was shown to him; and we are thus taught that God's people may, like Caleb, 'follow him fully,' and that we must not 'halt betwixt two opinions.' 5. God may arm the elements against us, and it is of his mercy that we are preserved from their fury: yea, the smallest and most contemptible of his creatures, may be made

instruments of his sore judgments upon us. 'We dwell in houses of clay, which are crushed before the moth.' The ravages of locusts should lead us to cease from man; to set our affections on the green pastures of the Zion above, which no locust shall ever invade; and to 'labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life.' 6. The judgment of the darkness, deep, long-continued, and attended with circumstances of peculiar horror, (Psalm lxxviii. 49.) while it was a severe infliction of God's justice on account of sin, presents to us a most just and solemnly instructive representation of our state by nature, as immured in the prison of spiritual blindness, reminds us of the signal mercy of God in causing 'the day-spring from on high to visit us;' and illustrates by contrast the mighty power of God, in 'calling his people out of darkness into his marvellous light.' In the dwellings of Israel 'there was light;' and the voice of melody and rejoicing is heard in the habitations of the righteous. Believers 'walk in the light,' while others stumble on in darkness. 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.' If we have this light in us we will show it by a holy conversation; and our great desire will be, to 'let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven.'

PRAYER.

Father of lights, with whom is no variableness or the least shadow of turning! from thee cometh down every good and every perfect gift. We bless thee that thou hast not left us to sleep the sleep of death; that the darkness of Egypt has not fallen around our dwelling, that we are again permitted to see the light of a new day; and that our habitation has not been swept away by the hail and the tempest of thy wrath. Thou art the great guardian of our sleeping hours, and thou makest the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to rejoice over us. Gracious Father! grant us in thy great mercy the tokens of thy favour. Speak not to us in thy wrath; visit us not in thy sore displeasure. May our sins be washed away in the blood of atonement. May we have a personal interest in the great salvation; and may the peace of God, which passeth understanding, keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Give us not over to the hardness of our own hearts. May we not stifle the voice of conscience, nor disregard the warnings of thy Spirit. May we guard against the deadening and destructive influence of evil passions, and of a worldly spirit. May we give more earnest heed to the sure word of prophecy, till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts. May our habitation be the dwelling of peace, and may the light of heaven ever shine upon it. May he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of

his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. And may our family be blest of the Lord, as one of the families of Israel; and may our friends ever enjoy thy protection and favour. Keep us this day from all evil, and fit us for every duty. May we be in thy fear at all times, and may it be our firm determination to serve thee with our whole hearts. May we never attempt to obey two masters, whose interests are at utter variance with each other. May we have a single eye to thy glory. May we go through the wilderness of this world, leaning on Jesus as the beloved of our souls; and when flesh and heart faint and fail, be thou the strength of our heart and our portion for ever. Our Father which art in heaven; hallowed be thy name, &c. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLII. 1—5.

SCRIPTURE—MARK v. 25—43.

REMARKS.

Many are the distresses of the poor; and the poor of Christ's flock are not exempted from the ordinary trials of life. Let us seek to do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith; and while we seek by the use of means for the cure of bodily diseases, let us not forget that the wasting plague of sin is destroying the vitals of our spiritual frame, and that by an application to Christ, the only physician, we may find a cure. What awful infatuation to neglect the balm of Gilead; to reject the physician there! Many are the devices of men to secure their salvation; but alas, they are utterly worthless; and blessed are they who, by practical conviction of the uselessness of human resources, have been led by a living faith to Christ, who is the way, and the truth, and the life! This poor victim of disease was strong in faith. She desired but to touch the hem of his garment, convinced that if she did so, a cure would follow. Humble faith dwells unseen in the heart of a contrite follower of the Redeemer; but it hath power with God; it aims at and it expects great things; and though neglected or contemned by man, it is honoured by him who looks to the heart. 'Only believe!' Yes, Jairus: with thee, and with the dear object of thy affectionate care, all will be well if thou shalt 'only believe!' In all trials a simple reliance on God's promises, and on the merits of the Redeemer, will be found to be a sure and stable security; and it is the afflicted believer only, who, in the midst of severest sufferings, can say from the heart, 'It is well!' Christ by an astonishing miracle of power and of mercy, raised the young woman to life. He gave the command; and the soul, which had taken its departure, instantly returned to the lifeless clay. The evidence of divinity is complete. The witnesses are sufficient in number, and they are above all suspicion. Infidelity is put to the blush, while the prayer of faith

is heard. May the Lord Jesus raise my soul from the death of sin, to the life of righteousness!

PRAYER.

O Lord! we bless thee for health of body and for soundness of mind. While many of our brethren around us are stretched on beds of pain, or have been long confined to the chamber of sickness, thou hast removed disease far from our dwelling-place, and hast graciously supplied our every want. Give us grace to be thankful, and may we diligently improve all the mercies which mingle in our lot. And O! put us not off with temporal comforts. Feed our souls with the bread of life. Heal our spiritual maladies. We recognise in Christ, thy well-beloved Son, a physician of infinite value; and, labouring under the disease of sin, we would appeal to him in faith for the balm of Gilead which faileth not. May we by a living faith draw near to him, and obtain health to our souls. And may we consecrate all our powers, and all our opportunities, to his service and glory. We rejoice in Christ Jesus as the living one, and as the author of life to the dead. We bless thee that he gave his life a ransom for many, and that he rose again triumphant from the grave. As he lives, may we live also. May the quickening energy of his Holy Spirit awaken us from spiritual death, and may we walk with him in newness of life. May each day, as it passes along, witness our progressive advancement in the way to heaven. May we grow in humility, in self-denial, in heavenliness of mind, in love to one another, and to the whole household of faith. Establish thy covenant with each one of us. Guide us by thy counsel, and afterwards receive us to glory. We thank thee for thy preserving care of us this day; and we would rear our memorial of gratitude before thee, and say, 'thus far the Lord hath helped us.' Blot out the sins of this day, and of all our days, in the blood of atonement; and graciously remove every ground of controversy betwixt ourselves and thee. We would lie down in peace and take quiet rest; knowing that thou, O Lord, makest us to dwell in safety. Hear our prayers, and give us an answer in peace, for our great Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXVI.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS XII.

REMARKS.

1. The hurry and bustle attendant on the departure of Israel from Egypt, formed no excuse for the neglect of religious duty, and we must ever guard

against the temptation to forget God amid the cares and anxieties of secular life. The more we are engaged in the business of this world, the greater care should we take to cherish a sense of God, and to be very pointed and serious in our religious duties. 2. Each family was required to provide a lamb as an offering to the Lord, and poor families might unite in this. Domestic piety is essential to the continued existence of religion in the world; and the altar of the family must be crowned with the hallowed incense of the morning and the evening sacrifice. 3. The blood of Christ, sprinkled on the heart and on the conscience, is the divinely constituted means of safety from the terrors of God's wrath. It gives boldness of access to the throne of grace. It becomes a wall of protection round about believers, while it marks them out as separated from a world lying in wickedness. 4. The paschal lamb is a remarkably striking typical representation of Christ, who, as our passover, has been sacrificed for us. He is the Lamb of God, without blemish, offered in the prime of his days, enduring the fire of his heavenly Father's wrath, while not a bone was broken. Do we receive him in his whole character, and for all the purposes of salvation? Do we rely on him with constant and habitual confidence? Do we feed on him in our hearts, by faith, with thanksgiving? In the daily exercise of godly sorrow for sin, and in habitual readiness for every duty, we shall find the life of faith and grace a feast indeed; a source of joy such as the world can neither give nor take away.

PRAYER.

Wherewithal shall we come before thee, O Lord, and bow ourselves before the most high God! We bless thee that thou hast left us in no fearful uncertainty regarding the ground of our acceptance, or the way of access to thy heavenly throne. Thou hast revealed thyself as the God of all mercy; and thou hast assured us that the blood of Jesus Christ, thine own Son, cleanseth from all sin. We would come before thee, in the name of him whom thou hast set forth to be a propitiation for our sins, and who ever lives to make intercession. May his peace-speaking blood be sprinkled on our guilty consciences; and being justified by faith, may we have peace with thee, and rejoice in hope of thy glory. May we mourn with genuine contrition on account of sin; and habitually cherish the godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of. Give us those supplies of grace and of spiritual strength that are suited to our necessities, and which thou hast promised to bestow. Quicken us for duty and for trial. May we have our loins girt and our lamps burning; and may we be as men that wait for the coming of their Lord. Almighty Father, may a sense of thy great goodness to us, to our family, to our friends, to our land, to our church, ever remain with us; and may those seasons of

great deliverance and of great mercy, which 'are much to be remembered' by us, make on our hearts, in the review of them, a deep, and salutary, and lasting impression. We bless thee for thy wonders to Israel, and for thy gracious interpositions in behalf of the church in later times. May thy hand and thy power appear unto us as to thy people of old. Build up Zion, even in troublous times; and may thy name be great, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. We cast our cares upon thee; thou carest for us. Family sins do thou, our Father, forgive; and accept of our fervent thanks for family mercies. Keep us, this day, in thy fear and favour. Fit us for all that is before us; and when the days of the years of our pilgrimage are ended, may an abundant entrance be administered to us into thy kingdom and glory, for the great Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 109—113.

SCRIPTURE—MARK VI. 1—29.

REMARKS.

1. Christ 'came to his own, and his own received him not.' O the fatal power of prejudice in turning men away from God. The men 'of his own country' upbraided Jesus with the poverty of his relations, and his consequent want of the means of education; and by so doing they succeeded too fatally in their malignant designs. May God, by his grace, deliver us from those awful prejudices of unbelief, which stand in the way even of the mighty power of Christ, and which render the gospel of peace a savour of death rather than of life to the soul. 2. It was a gracious commission which Christ gave to his apostles, to go forth as the heralds of light and life to a world blinded by sin, and lying in all the impotence of spiritual death. He gave them the most ample credentials, while he taught them the duty of a simple and entire dependence on himself. The ministers of the gospel do not now receive their commission in exactly the same way, nor have they the same miracles to show. But the message is one and the same; and 'how shall we escape, if we neglect the great salvation?' Clear and full is the revelation of truth and of grace that is made to us; and ample is its evidence. A fearful responsibility attaches to ministers, if they allow the trumpet to give an uncertain sound, and an awful doom awaits those of their hearers who turn away from him that 'speaketh from heaven.' 3. In the case of Herod, we mark the terrors of a guilty conscience. He had heard John with pleasure; he had been pleased with his preaching, and he respected his manner of life. But the faithfulness of the Baptist in reproving him, gave him offence; and no marvel if the world hate those who testify that its works are evil. Men may ad-

nire general descriptions of truth and virtue, but when conscience is probed, and when particular sins are pointedly exposed, then does the rooted enmity of the carnal mind to God clearly appear. How mysterious that the holy man of God should die by such means! And yet edifying are the issues of it. He dies a martyr to ministerial fidelity; and 'the memory of the just is blessed.' 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.'

PRAYER.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty! how shall we, guilty and polluted creatures, venture into thy presence, and take thy name into our polluted lips. Behold us, not as we are in ourselves, but in Christ Jesus, thy well-beloved Son, who died for us, and who rose again. We mourn over that unbelief and hardness of heart which keep us at a distance from the Saviour, and prevent us from realizing his glorious grace. O may the prejudices of the carnal mind be removed, and may we enjoy the blessedness of those who are not offended in Christ. May we live by faith in and on him. May the mighty work of grace be begun, and carried on, and completed in us by the gracious working of his power; and may we abound in all those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of thy great name. We thank thee that the message of salvation was sent to our world and to our land; and we pray that the light which now shines around us may shine also into our hearts. May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, that the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to them who believe. May Satan be seen falling as lightning from heaven, and may Christ Jesus be magnified in us, whether it be by life or by death. May the gospel of thy grace have free course and run and be glorified. Send the knowledge of salvation to the heathen; to the victims of Mahomedanism and antichristian delusion; and to our own countrymen in other lands, who are destitute of the means of grace. Revive thy work in the midst of the years. Give testimony to the word of thy grace, at home and abroad; and grant that the time may soon come when Messiah, the Prince, shall take to him his great power and reign over every land. Heavenly Father, we commend us to thee during the silent watches of the night. May our sleep be refreshing. May our dreams be devout, and may our waking thoughts be of thee. Go with us on the journey

of life. May our path be as the morning light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. May we press on to higher and higher attainments, and gain daily victories over the world and our own hearts. May our last days be our best days. May our closing hours be our brightest hours. At evening-tide may there be light. Keep us as the apple of thine eye; and bring us to thy heavenly kingdom, for the Lord the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 38.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS XIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In memory of the event which proved the immediate cause of their liberation from the house of bondage, viz. the destruction of all the first-born of the Egyptians, the Israelites are required from this time forward to sanctify to the Lord, that is, to set apart, or consecrate, all their first-born males, both of man, and of beast; the former to serve, the latter to be slain at the altar. The design of this significant ordinance, they are enjoined, when brought into the land of promise, carefully to explain to their children, that so being observed through successive generations, it might serve as a token on the hand, or as frontlets between the eyes, to perpetuate the grateful remembrance of the marvellous preservation and deliverance which they had just experienced. For the same purpose, they are commanded to eat unleavened bread—unfermented cakes, seven days every year. Unleavened bread was an appropriate memorial of the suddenness of their release, and also, like the bitter herbs eaten with the paschal lamb, of the grievous thralldom which they had long endured. Leaven, moreover, being an expressive emblem of corruption, bread unleavened aptly shadowed forth that 'spirit in which there is no guile,' that genuine self-mortifying obedience which in every age has characterized those who are 'Israelites indeed.' From Succoth, the Israelites, instead of marching right forward to their destination, through the country of the Philistines, which they could not have attempted without provoking a very unequal contest with that warlike people, are directed to proceed eastward to Etham, on the borders of the desert of Shur. Thither they are guided, by a remarkable symbol of Jehovah's special presence, which, alternately in the form of a pillar, of cloud and of fire, seems to have constantly accompanied them till their arrival in Canaan. The reason assigned for carrying with them the bones of Joseph, is as worthy of notice as the fact.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The consecration of the first-born of Israel, and the periodical use of unleavened bread, for a long series of ages, afford demonstrative evidence of the authenticity of the Mosaic records, and consequently

of the whole sacred volume; since it is utterly impossible to account for the existence of such monuments of fact, on any supposition but one, viz. the previous undoubted existence of the facts themselves. But the grand design of these, and similar ordinances, was, that one generation of his chosen might praise the works of Jehovah to another, and 'declare his mighty acts.' In meditating on them, besides being stirred up to reflect on the daily and hourly miracles of his providence, and especially on the more visible interpositions of his preserving and directing hand, in the critical emergencies and determinations of our lot, shall we forget, that we have all shared the offers at least of a redemption, compared with which deliverance from the iron yoke of Pharaoh was less in importance than a moment to eternity. Forgotten indeed the redemption of the soul cannot be, so long as baptism and the eucharist hold their place among the rites of the church. But let us take heed that the observance of these solemnities do not degenerate into a mere bodily service, a heartless and pernicious 'form of godliness.' Ever let them be revered as memorials and seals of all that is precious in the new and better covenant; and embraced as occasions—the one of dedicating our children, the other of consecrating ourselves and all that we have, to his service and glory, who redeemed us by his own blood from the grasp of Satan, and 'the wrath to come.' And at once, to secure and evince our unreserved devotion to the Lamb of God, evermore let us pray that the Holy Spirit, thoroughly purging out the old leaven of malice and wickedness, may write the law of love upon our hearts, thereby constraining and enabling us steadfastly to follow him whithersoever he goes: thus also, in a nobler way than by lavishing idle homage on their unconscious dust, inciting us to honour the memory of our illustrious ancestors of the faith, by emulating their virtues, and pressing eagerly and hopefully after them, to the full inheritance of the promises.

PRAYER.

Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and sea, and all things therein, we would humbly approach thee with the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise for the mercies of the past night, and the manifold comforts of this morning. Shepherd of Israel, thou watchest over us and ours, with an eye that never slumbers and never sleeps. Thou art our sun by day and our shield by night. Thou leadest us in green pastures, and beside the still waters. We feel that thou art drawing us to thyself by the cords of love; thou hast not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. May thine ineffable goodness prevail with us to forsake every idol, and to present unto thee our souls and our bodies a living sacrifice. God of our fathers, and our God, we thank thee for all the manifestations of thy paternal kindness and regard to this revolted world. Especially we bless thee for the revelation of thy glorious grace and righteous-

ness in the face of Jesus Christ. We rejoice that Messiah hath come, and put away sin by the once offering up of himself; and that there is now no condemnation to them who being united to him, walk no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit. May he be made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption. And enable us to give ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant: through his grace may we be crucified unto the world, and the world unto us: and setting him always before us as our Redeemer, pattern and guide, may we be transformed into his image, and so made meet for the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. God of peace, blot out the multitude of our iniquities; accept of us and our imperfect services in the Beloved; and grant for his sake, that goodness and mercy may follow us all the days of our lives, and that we, and all who are dear to us, may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CIVIL 25.

SCRIPTURE—MARK VI. 30—56.

REMARKS.

How justly may his name be called 'Wonderful,' in whom we here behold so marvellously blended the dependence and submission of man, with the power and the majesty of the most high God. The same adorable person heals multitudes afflicted with divers maladies, by simply permitting them to touch his body as he passes by—walks on the tempestuous sea—enlarges, by his creative benediction, a portion of bread which had scarcely sufficed for twenty men into a superabundant supply for five thousand—departs into a mountain to pray. The miracles of the loaves is distinguished by the peculiar publicity of the circumstances in which it was performed; a threefold demonstration of its reality having been afforded to every individual of that numerous assemblage: it shows that the Saviour, while he is chiefly concerned in the spiritual and eternal happiness of his people, sympathizes also in all their temporal want and privations; and incontestably proves that he wields at his will the energy by which all things were created, and by which all things consist. The contemplation of its several particulars is admirably fitted to impress on our hearts the much needed exhortation, 'be careful for nothing,' &c.; to manifest the sin of allowing the smallest portion of his unmerited bounty to be lost or misused; and the duty of carefully considering the necessities of our poorer brethren. This wondrous work of beneficence ended, Jesus withdraws from the society of men to hold undisturbed communion with his Father in heaven; an argument which might well be supposed omnipotent to convince his followers, whatever be the

amount of their present attainments in faith and holiness, or the multiplicity or urgency of their secular affairs, of the indispensable necessity of finding time for secret prayer. The disciples embark with reluctance, for their blessed Master remains behind, and a terrible night they encounter on the deep. How often have we, in consequence of lightly or wilfully parting from him, plunged ourselves into fearful danger and distress. Henceforth whatever we essay to do, wherever to go, let us make conscience of ascertaining that his sanction, and consequently his blessing, is with us; that in the darkest hours of peril or sorrow, we may have for an anchor of the soul the word long tried, and never by one real believer found wanting: 'weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' And devoutly exercising ourselves, to remember and turn to grateful account the peculiar pledges of his favour to our souls in time past, and the wonders of his loving-kindness and tender mercy to the church in every age, let us endeavour continually to 'abide in him:' that when at length we descend into the swellings of Jordan, deserted by every earthly friend, we may be sustained by assured tokens of his gracious presence, and hear his voice above the noise of those dread waves, saying, 'Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid.' Beautiful are the pictures of nature's sympathy exhibited in the concluding verses of this chapter: Christianity views them with interest, but meanwhile she sadly laments how few there be that discover even an equal concern in the health of the soul, which involves the question of its eternal death or life; as to that of the bodies of their friends, which by an inexorable decree must, when a few days are past, lie down in darkness and corruption, 'till the heavens be no more.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens. What is man that thou art mindful of him? Give us at all times to feel how weak, how dependent, how sinful we are; and let a double portion of the spirit of humility be poured out upon our hearts when we thus come before thee with the voice of supplication and prayer. Holy Father, thou hast mercifully preserved and guided us to the close of another day, and permitted us again, gathered round the family altar, to confess our sins, to adore thy majesty, and show forth thy praise in a song of Zion. Help us, we entreat thee, to trace all our comforts, temporal and spiritual, to the inexhaustible and eternal fountain of thy grace in Christ Jesus. Forbid that the very multitude and abundance of thy gifts should ever lead any of us to forget thyself, the author and dispenser of all good; or our own utter unworthiness of the least of thy mercies. Grant rather that the thought may be constantly and affectingly present to our minds, that it is in thee we live, and move, and have our being: and that thou hast

therefore an infinite right, not merely to the humble acknowledgments of our lips, but to the cordial and devoted obedience of our lives. And amidst all the manifestations of thy unmerited favour, help us ever duly to distinguish thine unspeakable gift. God of mercy thou hast not spared thine own Son, but delivered him up for us all. Glory be to thy name for all that he did, and suffered, and procured for sinners. We bless thee for the heavenly truths he revealed, for the holy precepts he enjoined and exemplified, and for the stupendous works of compassion and benevolence by which he was invincibly declared to be the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. We pray that his name may be adored, and his saving health proclaimed, from the rising to the setting sun. And O may it be given unto each of us to eat of his flesh, and drink of his blood, that we may have eternal life. May the chastisement of our peace come upon him, and by his stripes may we be healed. May the law of the spirit of life which is in him, make us free from the law of sin and death. Out of his fulness may we continually receive grace according to our varying necessities, and be all conducted by his power to the everlasting rest that remaineth for his people. Holy Father, through the intercession of our great high priest we desire to look for a gracious answer to our evening prayer; and entreat thee to protect us from all evil during the watches of the night, and to raise us up in health and comfort on the morning of a new day, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CVI. 7.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS XIV.

REMARKS.

There is before us one of the most illustrious demonstrations of the all-controlling power and retributive justice of Jehovah, recorded in the bible. Ver. 1—5. The position of the Israelites is now perilous in the extreme. Without discipline, without arms, pent up in a deep and narrow valley, in front the trackless sea, and though as yet this circumstance was unknown to them, a powerful and exasperated enemy about to pour upon their rear, well might their destruction appear inevitable. But never will the counsel of the Lord lead his people into straits, from which his hand is not able to bring them safely and triumphantly out. The supreme end of all that he does or permits us to do, is the manifestation of his own glorious perfections, and to this he makes subservient, no less the ruin of incorrigible transgressors, than the salvation of the humble and the

contrite ones. Yet, while the perfections of his nature and the honour of his name imperatively demand, either the repentance or the destruction of all presumptuous sinners, far from us be the thought that, in suffering any to persist till they perish in their rebellion, he becomes partaker of their guilt. The hearts of Pharaoh and his people are hardened by the permission, indeed, of Jehovah, but not through his co-operation. If he withhold subduing and converting grace, he only withholds what he is under no obligation to bestow. He wrongs not the fruitless desert by restraining from it the rain and the dew, which diffuse fertility and flowers over the face of happier climes; nor the mass of ordinary men, by the matchless gifts bestowed on Newton or Milton; nor the dark islands far off upon the sea, by the privileges of civilized and Christian Britain. Ver. 5—10. Strange, we are ready to say, that the 'great cry' of anguish and despair should be so soon borne down by the din of preparation to renew the desperate contest with Israel's God. Yet so it ever is. Affliction may grieve, appal, confound, but in itself has no power to renovate the heart. The bursting of the thunder cloud drives the fiercest denizens of the forest to their caves, but no sooner has the last peal of terror died away, than they sally forth, fiercer than before, to pursue their prey. Who has not been virtuous in purpose, when there seemed but a step between his soul and the world unseen and everlasting; and who has not wept over the issue of the resolves to which such hours gave birth? Ver. 10—13. The sight of Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen fills the camp of Israel with consternation; a few betake themselves to prayer, the multitude to harsh ungrateful murmurs. Meanwhile Moses, with the eye of faith, looks calmly on, and sees that mighty host rushing to one untimely and inglorious grave. Ver. 13—15. Happy they to whom the arm of the Lord is so revealed, in preparatory trials and deliverances, as to enable them, when called to encounter the last enemy, meekly and confidently to say, 'my soul, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.' Ver. 15—19. Prayer, the great cherisher of faith though it be, must not interfere with the claims of active duty. In the Christian's ear this word must ever be sounding 'go forward,' whether the path be smooth or rugged, the sky cloudy or light: let him therefore constantly endeavour to realize the full persuasion that nothing is too hard for the Lord, and that it is always better to depart and be with him. Ver. 19—21. In prospect of the most formidable temptations and conflicts, let the good soldiers of Christ farther reflect, that no adversary can approach them one hair's-breadth nearer, nor annoy them one instant longer, than their Master sees proper to permit, and that he can make those very things, which are comfort and protection to them, work dismay and death to their foes. Ver. 21—23. By bringing his people into deep waters, the Saviour effects two great purposes; he convinces them, by experience, of the utter vanity of all creature reliance, and that simple dependence on him is in itself a resource equal to every possible emergency. Ver. 23—26. An hour will come when the most daring persecutors of the followers of Christ shall wish to

retreat, for sooner or later they shall find, that in fighting against them, they fight against him. And if his angry looks be so terrible here, what must his frown be in the place where his mercy is clean gone for ever? Ver. 26—31. The grand catastrophe is now complete; Jehovah has triumphed gloriously, his chosen are free, and all the pride of the tyrant is buried in the avenging wave. These things were written for our learning, that we, habitually cultivating the fear of the Lord, and reposing unlimited confidence in his power and grace, may cleave to the path of duty, whatever be its hardships, waiting for the hour of perfect freedom, when numbered with those who have gotten the victory over the beast and over his image, we sing, with the harps of God in our hands, 'the song of Moses and of the Lamb

PRAYER.

Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy. To whom can we go but unto thee; thou hast the words of eternal life. Speak peace unto us, the sheep of thy pasture, this morning, and let thy hand be upon us for good throughout the day. Bless to our souls, we pray thee, that portion of thy holy word which we have now read. Make it quick and powerful; a discerner of the thoughts and intents of our hearts. As thou knowest we severally require, render it profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness. O Lord, may we learn to tremble lest the latter end of the wicked should be ours. Try us, O God, and cause us to know ourselves. Keep back thy servants from all presumptuous sins. Inspire us, we earnest beseech thee, with that godly fear which is the beginning of wisdom. Forbid that having often made light of the terrors of thy justice, we should also be found guilty of rejecting the overtures of thy grace. Forbid that thy long suffering patience should only aggravate our first condemnation and ruin. O let none of us lose the darkness rather than the light, because our deeds are evil. Enable us solemnly to bear in mind that the wages of sin is death, and that we know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh. Suffer us, therefore, no longer to despise the remonstrances of conscience or the warning voices of thy providence. Suffer us no longer to grieve and quench the Holy Spirit, longer to neglect or to trifle with the great salvation. O Lord, without thee we can do nothing. Make us a willing people in the day of thy power. Give unto us, on the behalf of Christ, to believe on his name; and do thou, for his sake, sprinkle our hearts from an evil conscience; work in us both to will and to do of

good pleasure, and enable us henceforth to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of thy law blameless. God of our righteousness, turn not away our prayers from thee, nor thy mercy from us. And hasten, we entreat thee, the time when all the ends of the earth and all the islands of the sea shall share with us the privileges and the blessings of the gospel of peace. And unto thee, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XV.

SCRIPTURE—MARK VII.

REMARKS.

The divine wisdom, dignity, and authority of Jesus are never more apparent than when we find him employed in confuting the cavils, and baffling the machinations of those remorseless persecutors, the scribes and Pharisees. His example, on this occasion, instructs us that we should study to be always prepared to justify any part of our conduct which may be called in question, by an appeal to the word of God, and to render a reason as well for the peculiarities of our belief as for the fundamental principles of the 'common faith' which it comprehends. From the part here acted by his adversaries, and the response which it met, let the ever seasonable instruction be impressed on our minds, 'first cast out the beam out of thine own eye,' &c.; let us learn the value of putting the shadow of religion in place of the substance, and to reject with abhorrence every pretended supplement to the sacred canon, and every doctrine, by whomsoever propounded, which tends to weaken or nullify the obligations of the divine law. Many are offended at the declaration that our law, in its fallen state, is totally corrupt and deformed. But what saith he 'whose Spirit searcheth us?' 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts.' The due consideration of this awful truth has a powerful tendency to abase every proud thought, and to render the salutary conviction, that the great principle of the necessity that a clean heart be renewed, and a right spirit renewed within, is that upon which it is possible to effect a thorough, eternal, and permanent reformation of the life. And impressive views of the total corruption of our nature are also fitted greatly to enhance the long-suffering mercy of Jehovah, and to render doubly precious the dispensation of sovereign grace, in which the provision is made at once for the remission of sin and the restoration of the soul to the beauty of holiness. Will not that be a blessed state in which the imaginations of the thoughts of the heart shall be only good, and that continually? The compassionate Redeemer, who never can belie his own promise, 'him that cometh unto me I will not cast out,' would seem for a moment to have almost to disdain the suit of the Syro-

phenician woman, the more fully to exercise and manifest her faith, to confer additional value on the benign answer he is about to return to her prayer, and to teach us, that with sincerity we must unite importunity and perseverance, in seeking an interest in his atoning blood. In the cure of the deaf man, there are circumstances for which no very satisfactory reason has ever been assigned. Might they not be expressly intended to check the presumptuous desire of being wise 'above that which is written,' and to show us that, for the present, we must be content, in many instances, with simply knowing the Saviour has acted in such a manner, confidently expecting that, in the light of a higher sphere, we shall be able, with inexpressible fulness of intelligence and delight, to say, 'he hath done all things well.'

PRAYER.

Father of the spirits of all flesh, with the deepest reverence and self-abasement we desire again to prostrate our souls at the footstool of thy throne of grace. Thou art the high and the holy One, who inhabiteth eternity and the praises thereof. We are sinful dust and ashes. Our hearts are by nature deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and we are chargeable in thy sight, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, with innumerable acts of delinquency and rebellion. If thou shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? But with thee there is mercy and plenteous redemption for the chief of sinners. Be merciful to us that we perish not. Enable us to repent, and embrace with the whole heart the gospel message of reconciliation. Give us right perceptions of the extent, the spirituality, and immutable obligations of thy holy law; and pour upon our hearts the spirit of conviction and contrition, that we may look upon him whom our sins have pierced, and mourn as one mourneth for an only son. But while we lament the guilty cause, let us be filled with exceeding joy, through the blessed effects of his humiliation and obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. Precious to our weary heavy laden souls is the assurance that the blood of thy Son cleanseth us from all sin. For his sake hide thy face from our transgressions, and remember them no more for ever. And vouchsafe to us also, we do earnestly pray, deliverance from the bondage of corruption. Baptize us with the Holy Ghost as with fire. Sanctify us wholly in soul, and body, and spirit. Enable us to delight in thy law after the inner man, and make us altogether such as thou wouldst have us to be. Holy Father, we desire to intercede with thee on behalf of our beloved relatives and friends. With us may they be washed in the fountain opened in the house of Israel, and created again in Christ Jesus unto good works; and when all our wan-

derings and trials in this land of strangers and pilgrims are ended, may we have a joyful meeting in the light and purity of his heavenly kingdom. Gracious God, forgive, we entreat thee, the sins of the day and the week now past, and surround us by thy favour during the hours of repose. Grant also that we may be duly prepared for the solemn and delightful services of the approaching sabbath. And do thou strengthen the hands of every faithful minister, and bless all the assemblies of thy saints, and let thy word have free course and be glorified in all the regions of the earth. And unto thee, with the Son and the blessed Spirit, shall be ascribed the glory, as it was in the beginning, now is, and ever shall be. Amen.

NINTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XVI. 5.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XXX.

REMARKS.

This psalm is entitled a song at the dedication of the house of David, and is generally supposed to have been written after the dwelling of this prince had been polluted with the vile conduct of his son Absalom. There are contained in it several highly interesting topics of reflection. The sacred writer commences by an ascription of praise to God, for various mercies manifested towards him. These seem to have consisted in deliverance from the hand of his enemies, when he was nigh to losing both his life and kingdom. Accordingly he humbles himself before God, acknowledges the relief which he had experienced, and declares his total dependence to be upon him who was the author of his life, and the fountain of his salvation. We have here an excellent pattern of conduct, when placed in similar circumstances. The more God raises us, it becomes us to be more lowly in the hour of trouble, to have recourse by prayer to a throne of mercy, and when the blessing is received thankfully to acknowledge the same. Having expressed his own sentiments of gratitude to his Maker and Redeemer, he proceeds to animate others to the performance of the same duty. And he had ample reason for doing so. For though the people of God may have no present sense of any remarkable mercy lately received; nevertheless, past experience of the divine faithfulness should, upon all occasions, constitute matter of gratitude and praise to God. It is admitted that believers may experience, for good reason, the displeasure of their heavenly Father. In these cases however, he is not only slow to anger, but is soon pacified; while, as it were to counterbalance any effect of his wrath, his favour is productive of the sweetest joy, and what is best of all, when once

secured, however interrupted for a time, is of an imperishable and enduring nature. The sacred writer, advertg to the occasion of this psalm, next goes on to speak of his late experience. Here he frankly acknowledges that he had abused his prosperity. Instead of remembering that he stood wholly by grace, he had forgotten to keep himself in awe, and therefore trusting to his own resources, he had felt the bitter consequences of doing so. The people of God, though often in trouble, have their times of prosperity. In such a condition they are very liable to fall into carnal security. It becomes all such, therefore, in these circumstances ever to remember, that whatever they have depends wholly upon unmerited grace. Consequently lest God may see it necessary, not only to withdraw from under their heads the smooth pillow of those benefits upon which they are ready to slumber, but also their sense of reconciliation to him, it becomes them to stand constantly in awe, and join trembling with their mirth. In the time of outward ease, men understand not the folly of their way. But when they have smarted for their conduct, and tasted the fruit of their spiritual forgetfulness, they come to perceive these, and to wonder at their past blindness. The conclusion of this sacred song exhibits the psalmist declaring his recovery from trouble, as well as from sinful security praising God for his kindness, and binding himself for the future to have a view at all times to the glory of his Saviour and God. Correction therefore, it would appear, raises a believer out of spiritual sloth, and ever constrains him to active exertion. For though a man may have erred from the path of duty, and that he may see the evil of doing so, may have felt the rod, he is not on that account to sink down in listless despondency; but on the contrary without any delay, to make supplication for mercy to pardon, and grace to help. And if he do so, he will not be disappointed. God has no delight in the death of any sinner; and no pleasure in the destruction of a transgressor. He would rather that such one, instead of going down to the pit, would glorify his name. The prayer of penitence, when grounded upon the covenant of peace, in the all-prevailing Mediator, may expect an answer. And when it has been experienced, he will not only glorify his Maker, but rejoice in him as all his salvation and his desire; will not only serve him in prosperity, but have recourse to him in trouble. This may well be the case. God was angry with him, but his anger is turned away. Grief has given way to gladness and sorrow to songs of salvation.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, who art over all, God blessed for evermore, unto whom shall we give all praise, but unto thee, for thou alone art worthy to receive all homage, and thou hast in thyself the words of eternal life. Thou art the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. Thou art the supreme governor among all the nations of men. Thou art the unfailing refuge of them who place their trust in thy ever holy and all-excellent name. On this, the morning

thy hallowed day, we will then praise thee for the glory of thy majesty, and we will join together in acknowledging the greatness of thy mercy. For verily thou art a great God, and a great King above all gods. Thou hast in thy hands the depths of the earth, and also the strength of the everlasting hills. Thou art also good and gracious. In thee all thy creatures live, and move, and have their being. Thou didst at first create us out of nothing, breathe into us the breath of life, and make us living, and rational, and immortal spirits. Thou still sustainest us upon the earth. Thy goodness is new to us every morning, and thy faithfulness every evening. How great is the loving-kindness of the Lord! And all this is highly enhanced, when we call to mind our own unworthiness. What is man that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man that thou deignest to visit him? Not only have we sinned against God, in times and ways unnumbered. Not only have we, by a thousand iniquities, deserved thy righteous displeasure; but, notwithstanding all the bounties enjoyed by, and all the privileges conferred upon us, we are ever, by reason of hearts naturally depraved, and by reason of unbelief, ready to depart from thy ways, and scorn the paths of thy commandments. It is our encouragement, however, to know that there is mercy with thee, that thou mayest be feared. O then, for the sake of thy Son who died for sinners, and who rose again, who is even at thy right hand, and whom thou hearest always, lift on us the light of thy countenance and love us freely. O do not remember our sins against us, but mercifully blot them all from the book of thy remembrance. Thou hast no pleasure in the death of the wicked, thou hast no delight in the punishment of the rebellious. Thou knowest that there is no profit in our blood, and no praise from us in the dust. We now therefore cry, and make supplication unto thee. And we trust that thou wilt hear and have mercy upon us. We stand in need of purifying grace, no less than pardon. Create in us clean hearts, renew within us right spirits. Conform us more and more to thy blessed image, and having a sense of thy forgiving love in Christ brought home to us by thy Spirit, let us run with enlargement of heart the way of thy commandments. Let thy grace strengthen us against inward weakness and outward temptations. If left to ourselves we become foolish and thoughtless; and are ever ready to fall down the prey of our spiritual enemy. Deliver us then by thy power, lest we expose ourselves to thy correcting hand. If however, we should come to meet with trials let

us not despond, but rather, resigned to thy will, hope in thy returning mercy, and having our soul's desire to thee, and to the remembrance of thy name, comfort ourselves with the recollection, that though weeping may endure for a night, joy will come in the morning. For these purposes bless to us the means of grace, and bless the same to all who are privileged to enjoy them. Go forth on this thine own day, with a preached word everywhere. Let thy name be glorified in the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints; wherever the name of the Saviour is declared in truth, may he be the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation. Draw nigh to such as are in distress. Comfort the mourners, relieve the oppressed, speak peace to the dying. Hear this day the prayer of the aged man. Hear the prayer of the man engaged amid the cares of life. Hear the prayer of the inexperienced man. And may all these, with ours, ascending to heaven above, draw down a blessing, even the answer of peace, from thee the mighty God of Jacob. And to thee, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be all praise for ever and ever. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM IX. 7.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XXXI.

REMARKS.

This psalm seems to have been composed at a time when the writer was placed in circumstances of great and imminent peril. Accordingly he commences it by an earnest prayer for deliverance. God is frequently pleased to expose his people to a variety of trouble. But when he does so, he does not deprive them of the privilege of access to him; nay, if faith and hope in his promises be not altogether for the time extinguished, they will, at such seasons, be more constrained to draw nigh unto him, for mercy to pardon and grace to help in time of need. Nor will they be disappointed. In themselves they are weak, and frequently little able to escape the snares which their cunning enemies lay for them. But greater is he who is for them than all who can be against them. The word of God having given the believer an assurance of his everlasting redemption, may be to him a sufficient guarantee that his real interests can never be materially affected, and he may therefore well commit himself and all that concerns him into the hands of a covenant-keeping and faithful God. The writer of the psalm before us illustrates this farther by his experience of past mercy. And surely this ought to be a great ground of hope in the divine goodness. For, surely, if the Almighty have protected and preserved

us in times past, has even considered our trouble, and known his people in their adversity, they may well be glad and rejoice in him, as David did, at all times and in all circumstances. The troubles of a righteous man may be very great. In the case of the divine Saviour, of whom, as in many other cases, the psalmist may be here considered as a type, trouble was peculiarly grievous. They are here recounted. He may have pain of body, weariness of soul, arising sometimes from one cause and sometimes from another; sometimes from within the man, sometimes from the world without. Nay, these troubles may rise to such a height as to bring the spirit into great and terrible temptation. In all these cases the refuge of the believing soul is just that which is pointed out in the psalm. And what is that? It is neither more nor less than trust in God. This we find the psalmist ground upon the providence of God, which protecteth all his creatures; upon the promise of God, which respecteth his own; upon the power of God, which can rise above all opposition; and upon the justice and holiness of God, which will eventually silence all lying lips, and destroy all those who speak grievous things, proudly and contemptuously, against the righteous. This sacred and consolatory song very properly concludes by describing the privileges of those who exercise this faith. Such are preserved from the enmity of man, and guarded against the malice of the world, and thus may have a peace and a comfort which no contingency can ever take away. Accordingly, he exhorts all to have confidence in God. They who cherish the same will have their hearts strengthened, and their souls kept by the power of God unto salvation.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most blessed God, who art the Father of lights and the fountain of all blessing, we would upon this, the evening of thy holy day, come into thy presence, and worship at the footstool of thy throne on high. Thou art our Creator. Thou didst at first form us out of nothing, breathe into us the breath of life, and make us rational, and living, and immortal souls. We depend upon thee for the continuance of life and all its enjoyments. Were thy hand withdrawn for one moment, our breath would depart, our countenance would change, we would decay and die. Let us then ever remember that we are not our own, but that we are thine, and that to thy unmerited kindness we owe every thing which we have, and every thing which we hope to possess. More especially, O our God, let us, in the day of trouble and grief, when these may come, put all our trust in thy mercy. The carnal spirit, we feel, is most ready at such seasons to look to the creature, and expect to find relief in the world. But alas, that is vain. Let us then be animated with the spirit of those who, being reconciled to, are in covenant with, thee through Christ, and thus knowing that their im-

mortal interests are secure, have, in tribulation, not only peace, but even comfort and joy. And that this may be the case, may thy Holy Spirit open to us, out of thy word, our fallen condition as sinners, lead us to increasing faith in Christ the Saviour, and so fill our souls with all joy in believing. We know that without this there can be no true happiness here. We are every day exposed to temptation. But if we have an interest in thy word, and a share in the riches of thy grace, a triumph will be obtained by us over every enemy. We know that we are every day liable to suffering. But if we have an interest in thy word, and a share in the riches of thy grace, all things, whether prosperous or adverse, will work together for our good, as well as for thy glory. We know that we are every day subject to death. But if we have an interest in thy word, and a share in the riches of thy grace, we shall, at the last hour, be able to commend our spirits into thy hand, seeing thou hast redeemed us, Lord God of truth. Our souls then would wait for the Lord; yea, our souls would wait for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning light. Keep us ever in thy fear; guide us ever by thy counsel; leave us not to ourselves; give us not over to the world. Follow with a blessing all the religious exercises in which we or thy people any where may have been engaged in. Pardon the sins of our holy things. Forgive our formality, our insensibility, our indifference, which too frequently mingle with our religious services. Let thy knowledge be spread over all people. Comfort, this evening, the depressed, and be gracious to the dying. Let thy hand be about us and all our friends. If it be thy holy will that we should see the light and partake of the enjoyments, fit us for the duties of another day. The longer we live, let us live the more to thy praise, and be gradually fitted for spending an eternal sabbath in the land of rest. Mercifully forgive our unnumbered sins; and all we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM xciv. 1.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS xv.

REMARKS.

The sacred song before us was composed at a very remarkable period. Emancipated after a series of marvellous wonders from the bondage of Egypt, and directed to proceed towards the promised inheritance, the favoured people of God are brought to the shores of the Red sea. Here they find them-

selves placed in a most perilous condition. With the army of Pharaoh pressing hard behind, with impassable mountains on each side, and with the rolling waters of the sea in front, they feel themselves in a most perplexing strait. But deliverance, as ever was the case, is at hand. At the command of the Almighty, Moses the leader of Israel, stretches his hand over the billow: no sooner is this done, than the waters, dividing, form a passage, and the redeemed of the Lord, passing through the same, immediately stand secure on the opposite shore. God having thus saved Israel, Moses and the people join in this song of thanksgiving and praise. The matter of it is just what upon such an occasion might be expected. It commences with an ascription of praise to, and an expression of confidence in, God. He is the fountain of all blessing, no less than the object of universal and eternal homage. He is, more especially in the season of trouble, a very present help to them who are his own; and is on these grounds unceasingly worthy of regard and love, as well as abundantly fitted to call forth the graces of encouraging faith, and elevating hope. This sacred song next records the destruction of the Egyptian host, and attributes the triumph gained over them in this respect, not to any thing in Israel who had been saved, but to the might and the mercy of him who is in all his doings glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, ever doing wonders. Hence we may learn two useful and necessary lessons. 1. Experience of extraordinary mercy, requires expression of extraordinary gratitude. God indeed ever deserves the praise of all creatures. But more especially is this the case, when we have been visited with some peculiar manifestation of his kindness, and love. 2. All our blessings, and more especially those which consist in deliverance from evil, should ever be considered as coming not from the creature, but from the hand of him, who, as he is omnipotent in power, and unerring in wisdom, maketh all things work together for his own glory, and the good of his people.

The termination of the chapter presents us with a striking manifestation of human depravity. God had just delivered Israel from trouble and danger, and done so by a display of his most glorious perfections; nevertheless, at the first inconvenience they begin to murmur. As formerly, he removes the cause of complaint, and even renews his promise to them. But he here proved them. Does not this teach us to be at all times humble, and to search our own heart lest there be in them any root of bitterness? We are very apt to forget the past goodness of God, and when trouble again visits us to repine under his hand. This is great ingratitude. But it is ever our encouragement that our faith is then tried. If we then return unto God, he will heal us. If not, we can expect nothing else than the consequences of rebellion against him, and so feel the punishment of such as through unbelief were not permitted to enter into the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

PRAYER.

O Lord, who art the only living and true God, praise waits for thee in Zion, and thou alone art

the object of adoration and homage, obedience and love. Thou art great, and greatly to be had in reverence, being a great God, and a great King above all gods. This striking perfection of thy all-glorious nature, thou hast exhibited in all the works which thou hast done among the children of men. In the beginning thou didst make the heaven and the earth, and all that therein are. At thy command, for thou art omnipotent, the sun and all the host above shone in the fair firmament. At thy command, the earth, with its strength, and fertility, and beauty, stood upon her everlasting pillars. At thy command, man and beast, and every living thing, were seen to people the fair fabric. Surely there is no God like unto thee, and there is none among the sons of the mighty who can once be compared unto thee. Glorious art thou in holiness, fearful in praises, ever doing wonders. As in the omnipotence of thy power, thou hast created, so in the exercise of that attribute thou still superintendest the affairs of thy universe. All things are under thy command and guidance; all creatures, animate and inanimate, depend upon thy providence and care. Thy mercy is in the heavens; thou art the preserver of man and beast. Let us then extol thy name, let us tell thy excellence, let us show forth the wonders of thy power. We would ever adore thee, especially as the Redeemer of the guilty, through thy Son, our Saviour. Blessed be thy name, that thou didst think of us in our low and in our lost estate. Blessed be thy name, that thou didst send the Son of thy love to die for us. Blessed be thy name, that our redemption has been accomplished, and that he is now a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and the remission of all their sins. O Lord our God, as our bodies are constantly sustained by thy power in life, and breath, and all things, may our souls be redeemed from sin, through the might of thy grace. Deliver us then, we beseech thee, from the punishment of guilt; emancipate us, we beseech thee, from the dominion of sin; raise us, we beseech thee, above the power of temptation, so that we may experience upon our souls the influences of that Almighty Spirit which quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that be not, as though they were. We are very ready, we acknowledge, to forget our dependence upon thee, and to ascribe our mercies to our own merits. O deliver us even from such a delusion; may we ever remember, that as thou art the God of our life, and the fountain of our salvation, so every blessing, whether it be the attainment of good, or whether it be deliverance from evil, is

owing solely to him in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Let us therefore often meditate on the riches of thy love. For thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people whom thou hast redeemed, thou hast guided them by thy strength to a holy habitation. We commend us unto thee at this time. As thou hast spared us through the night departed, and brought us to the light and enjoyments, fit us for all the duties, of another day. O Lord, save us from outward accident. O Lord, keep us from evil. O Lord, visit us with thy goodness. O Lord, comfort us with the hope of thy salvation. Guide us by thy counsel, prepare us for thy will, and finally receive us to thyself. And all we ask is only in the name, and for the sake, of Christ. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXVI. 5.

SCRIPTURE—MARK VIII.

REMARKS.

This chapter contains variety of interesting and instructive matter. At the commencement of it we are favoured with an account of a remarkable miracle, somewhat similar to one previously recorded, and in which four thousand individuals are fed with seven loaves and a few fishes. We are, in this instance, furnished with a striking testimony to the omnipotent power of the divine Saviour; and that, though man, he was indeed over all, God blessed for evermore. Moreover, we may perceive in this instance the truth of his doctrine; and that he was what he pretended to be, the Son and the sent of God. And still farther, we have in this instance a beautiful and attractive illustration of his benignant compassion. He had pity for the multitude. Accordingly, that they might not faint by the way, he performs a marvellous miracle in their behalf. How weak is man, how great his dependence upon God! In himself he has no resource, and thus, for every thing which he has, or may hope to enjoy, must be indebted to the kindness of that blessed one. How should we distrust ourselves and look only to God! We are ready to look to the creature, but we should, instead of being cumbered about many things, have recourse only to the Creator. After this, as he came to another district of the country, we are presented with a strange exhibition of unbelief. He had wrought, among those whom he addressed, many striking miracles, in manifestation of his divine power. Still however his enemies, the Pharisees, in a spirit of pertinacious obstinacy, ask a sign. As he wrought not miracles for satisfying vain curiosity, he refuses to gratify them, and accordingly, with an ominous admonition, he bids adieu to those who would not receive him. Farther on in the chapter, we find, in the case of his disciples, a very salutary lesson of human frailty, and of Christian duty. Having for-

gotten to take a supply of food with them, these individuals, from what passed among them, seem still to have distrusted his providential care over them, and might therefore be well said to have eyes but to see not, to have ears but to hear not. On coming to Bethsaida, we have an account of another miracle performed by the divine Saviour. And it is particularly mentioned, evidently for two reasons. 1. With reference to the signs employed. Sometimes our Lord employed outward signs in his miracles, and sometimes not. This he did to show that in these themselves there was nought, and that he could do without them. 2. With reference to the gradual nature of the cure. Upon some occasions he healed at once by a command. Upon others this was not the case, but the benefit was conferred by progressive acts. At the end of the chapter, our Lord, to prepare his disciples for what was at hand, announces to them some truths, which, though far from being welcome to them, were nevertheless of the most wholesome nature. These were the following. Having announced to them his approaching death, and most severely rebuked Peter for questioning his word upon this matter, he takes occasion, from this circumstance, to preach in most emphatic terms the duty of self-denial.

He was to suffer before he could enter into glory. They who believe upon him, as living in a world careless of God and lying in wickedness, must be prepared, in the exercise of their profession, to suffer also. But he withholds not due and ample encouragement. For by acting in a different manner, even with the attainment of a whole world, they forfeited eternal bliss, while attachment to his cause, and reception of his word, would insure to them, in the world to come, an eternity of peace and joy. Who would hesitate for a moment which of these alternatives he would choose? For surely is it not better far, infinitely better, to attain finally the everlasting joy of God's chosen; than with all which a world could give, to lie down at last in devouring flames and everlasting burnings? There can be no doubt upon this. Let us then take up our cross and follow Christ, and through bad and good report be faithful unto death, that we may obtain a crown of eternal life.

PRAYER.

Eternal God, who art every where present, the Father of lights, and from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, we may well adore and bless thy name. O how many have been thy wonderful works, and thy compassionate thoughts to the fallen sons of men. But alas, we are most ready to forget the God who made us, and lightly esteem the rock of our salvation. Deliver us from this sin, and remember it not any more against us. We adore thy name for all the mercy shown to us throughout this day. And now we pray that we be enabled to glorify thy name, both by reason of thine own excellence, and by reason of thy kindness to us. May we rejoice in thee at all times, as our

help and our hope, and instead of ever desponding in times of trial, may we take thy past, as a pledge of thy future love. Above all things, we pray for spiritual blessing; and while thou art feeding our bodies with the bread which perishes, feed our souls with the bread of life which cometh down from heaven, and of which, if a man eat, he shall never die. Lord, evermore give us this bread. May our souls then be enlightened with the knowledge of thy truth, fitted with heavenly grace, and inspired by the breathing of thine eternal Spirit. Then we shall live happily here, and be prepared for the exercises and enjoyments of hereafter. We lament before thee, the sad depravity of our hearts; we mourn over our readiness to depart from thy ways. O establish us in the faith! O conform our souls to thy image! O strengthen our resolutions! In the day of duty may we be diligent, in the season of trial patient, in the hour of temptation faithful. Taking up our cross may we follow Christ, and whatever inconveniences may arise in this career, may we be strengthened to bear with them all, and be more than conquerors through him who loved us. Be with us, and with all connected to us, whether by the ties of nature, or friendship, or grace, this evening. Watch over us. Let no evil come nigh unto us. If thou art pleased to spare us until another day, when we awake may we behold thy face in righteousness, and be satisfied with thy likeness. Hear and accept for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXI.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS XVI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—3. However prosperous men's circumstances may be for a time, privations and troubles, in various forms, may be expected by them sooner or later; and when they are actually subjected to them, instead of repining against God, they should bear them with resignation, piously acknowledging his hand, and look to him, in faith and prayer, for relief. Ver. 4—8. The Lord will not utterly desert his people, who look to him and cry to him in their straits, even though they may feel and express themselves more strongly than the circumstances of their case can justify; a truth, however, which they should be careful not to abuse: nay, he will surely provide what is necessary for their support. Ver. 9—15. The miracles here described demonstrate Jehovah's power and willingness to help his people. Ver. 16—31. The doctrine of the perpetual and universal obligation of the sabbath is here plainly taught and strikingly illustrated, in as much as it existed before

the giving of the law of Moses, and the greatest care was taken to honour it, while, at the same time, diligence on the other days of the week, to procure what is necessary for the life that now is, is clearly enjoined. Ver. 32—36. And, finally, the laying up of a certain quantity of the manna, instructs us in the duty of keeping the Lord's past goodness in pious and grateful remembrance.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

We are all passing on, as it were, through the wilderness, in the journey of life; let us see to it that we have indeed left, in our hearts and in our habits, the worse than Egyptian bondage of sin, satan, and the world, and that we be on the way that leads to the heavenly Canaan. If it be happily so with us, let us not, on account of any difficulties which may arise, begin to hanker after the sins and follies which we have forsaken. Whatever straits may arise, we have no reason to fear that our God will abandon us to perish, or suffer us to faint unrelieved by the way. Let us beware of rashly and unthankfully imputing any want of kindness or of care to him who is more interested in us than we are in ourselves; let us beware of this, lest, when relief comes, it come less blessed than it would otherwise come, and come at least with a Father's frown; and lest, however valuable in itself, it furnish us with an occasion of stumbling. Though we are not now to expect food to be furnished to us miraculously, yet we are here encouraged to believe, that by his powerful and gracious providence, certainly neither less real nor less valuable, God will supply all our temporal wants. In John vi. the Lord Jesus Christ expressly teaches us to regard the provision of manna, made for the Israelites, as intended for our spiritual instruction, and typical of the provision made for our souls in the gospel. 'I am that bread of life,' said he, 'your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.' 'If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I give is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world.' How thankful ought we to be for this spiritual food, which can nourish us up to eternal life! and how earnestly ought we to pray, 'Lord, evermore give us this bread!'

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever-blessed Lord God, look upon us in mercy, now that we approach thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Saviour, and in a dependence on the assistance of thy Holy Spirit. Thou art infinitely exalted, yet infinitely condescending. Though thou art altogether independent of us, and we have offended grievously against thee, thou takest a kind and fatherly interest in all our concerns, both temporal and spiritual. We thank thee for all those instances in which the dispensations of thy providence towards us have been directly and obviously favourable. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits. Give us grace to be thankful also for all the privations and troubles with which we have been visited, and to say, from the heart, Shall we receive good

at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil also? Continue, we beseech thee, to furnish us with whatever is necessary for our bodily support, while we sojourn on earth. Give us day by day our daily bread; and having food and raiment, may we be therewith content. But O let us not be so concerned and busied about the meat that perisheth, as to neglect that meat which endureth unto everlasting life. Feed us, we pray thee, with the bread of life that cometh down from heaven. Lord, refresh our souls with light, and pardon, and peace, and holiness, and all the blessings of gospel salvation. May it please thee, also, to keep us in a spirit of habitual and constant dependence on the communications of thy grace, so that we may daily and hourly be obtaining fresh supplies from the inexhaustible fountain of our Redeemer's fulness. May the pure and noble enjoyments which thou hast provided for us, abundantly satisfy our souls, so that we may never become desirous of returning to the follies and sins of the world, which we profess to have heartily forsaken. Lord, enable us so to conduct our temporal concerns that they may not interfere with those of our souls and of eternity. Give us, especially, to have a most conscientious regard to thy holy sabbath. May we wisely prepare for its weekly return; may we hail it when it actually arrives; and may we enjoy it as a foretaste of the rest which remaineth for thy people, and improve it as a preparation for an eternal sabbath in heaven. We bless thee for watching over us during the darkness and silence of the past night, and for sparing us to see and enjoy this day. With the light of the morning lift upon us the light of thy gracious and reconciled countenance. Take us under thy protection throughout the day. Keep us from all evil, and assist us in every duty. Never leave us, O Lord; never forsake us. While we live, may we be guided by thy counsel, and when we die, may we be received to thy glory, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIII.

SCRIPTURE—MARK IX. 1—29.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—10. The first thing contained in this passage is an account of our Lord's transfiguration on the mount. Ver. 11—13. In this, we have a proof and a display of the divine glory, of the supreme Godhead, of the Redeemer; for, he who had taken upon him the form of a servant, now reassumed, for

a short time, the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. Here also we have a proof of the souls of believers in a state of separation from the body, and of consciousness and happiness; for, though Elias was in the body, having been translated without tasting of death, Moses had died, and his body was buried. We learn, too, from the appearance of Elias, how great will be the glory of the risen bodies of Christ's people, when he shall change their vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body. And, from the intelligent intercourse which now took place, we may infer that the saints will be able to distinguish one another, and to become personally acquainted in heaven. Ver. 14—29. After a brief allusion to the coming of John the Baptist, in an office and character similar to those of Elijah, Mark gives a full description of our Lord's casting out a deaf and dumb spirit. From this history we may infer the reality of the demoniacal possessions recorded by the Evangelists; the duty of parents and others to bring their children and friends to Christ; the necessity of faith to the accomplishment of any thing truly great and good; and the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to destroy the works of the devil in every sense.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How delightful to contemplate, in what we read in the first nine verses of this chapter, the man of sorrows for once, during the period of his humiliation, arrayed in divine splendour, and attended by some of the citizens of heaven! Let this confirm our faith in his Messiahship and divinity. 'We have not followed cunningly devised fables,' says the apostle Peter, 'when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice, which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.' We have here a beautiful example of pious conversation, and a call to study to improve our intercourse in that way. And what topic can be more interesting than the deicide which Jesus accomplished at Jerusalem, the atoning death of the Son of God, in all its circumstances and results? Let us improve the affectionate but inconsiderate proposal to remain on the mount. It is right that we should not weary of ordinances in which we hold communion with Christ, but rather wish such seasons to be prolonged. There is a proper limit, however, to this. Our life must not be altogether a life of devout contemplation; it must also be very much a life of action. The most favoured opportunities here below must have their close. Let us carefully attend to God's declaration and command, 'This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.' Let us mark and improve the history and ministry of him who came in the spirit and power of Elias, as a fulfilment of prophecy, and as intended to prepare the way for our submission to the Saviour. As for the account of the miracle of the casting out of the deaf, and dumb, and foul spirit, it abounds with important practical

instruction. Let us be thankful that the power of Satan over men's bodies is now so much restrained; but let us remember that his influence over men's mind is still great. Let parents be even more anxious for the spiritual cure than they are for the bodily health of their children; and let us all apply for ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, that he would deliver us from the bondage of sin, satan, and the world, and bless us with the spiritual liberty wherewith he makes his people free.

PRAYER.

Most gracious God, may we find it good for us to be here, and to be thus engaged at this time. Though we cannot be always employed in positive acts of worship, may we delight in frequent opportunities; and even while we are discharging other duties, may we be ever ready to turn to thee, and in respect of the prevalent disposition of our minds, pray without ceasing; pray always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit. Glory be to thee, O Father of mercies, and God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for sending thine only begotten and well beloved Son into the world, to suffer and die for us miserable and perishing sinners. And blessed be thy name, O thou divine Redeemer, who didst so long veil that glory of which a glimpse was given on the mount of transfiguration, and didst accomplish that decease at Jerusalem on which all our hope of mercy is founded. What could we have looked for but fiery indignation, hadst thou not put away sin by the sacrifice of thyself? But if even while we were enemies, we were reconciled by thy death, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by thy life? How are we indebted to thy bounty, O Lord, we whom thou hast redeemed with so precious a ransom, enriched with so noble a gift, honoured with so high a privilege! What fear, what love, what thanks, what praise, are due by us to thee who hast thus pitied, thus loved, thus rescued, thus sanctified, thus exalted us! The whole of our ability, the whole of our hearts and services, our very life and being, are thy just tribute. But, alas, how weak, and sinful, and lukewarm are we! What can we do without thee? Thou, therefore, from whom all good things do come, impart to us, for thy name's sake, of thy good treasure, that of thy own good gifts we may give back again to thee, and, by thy grace, be enabled to trust, and serve, and please thee, and to render thee due and daily praise for all thy works of mercy, yea, even for the very power of rendering thee this praise. What requital shall we make for all thy inestimable mercies! Thou commandest us to love thee, but how can we ever love thee enough? nay, who are we, that

thou shouldest desire or accept our love at all? In truth, however, may we be able to say, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that we love thee. Thou art our strength, our fortress, our refuge, our helper, our deliverer: in a word, thou art our God; and whatever we have, or can do, or are, or hope, all is of thee, and in thee, and by thee, and to thee. The case of the demoniac is but a faint emblem, O Lord, of our sinful, degraded, and enslaved condition, from the very womb. Deliver us, by thy grace and power, deliver us and ours from this wretched thralldom. Enable us, we pray thee, to realize the blessings of salvation, through faith in the righteousness of the Redeemer. May it be given unto us, in behalf of Christ, to believe in his name. We believe; Lord, help our unbelief; Lord, increase our faith. Open our ears to hear thy truth. Enable us to incline our ear and come to thee, to hear that our souls may live. Open also our lips, that our mouth may show forth thy praise. May nothing proceed out of our mouth but that which is good to the use of edifying. May we delight to speak of the things of God, and to spread abroad the savour of the Redeemer's name. Strengthen us also, we beseech thee, for all the duties of the Christian life, that we may prove the sincerity of our profession, and the reality of our deliverance from the guilt of sin and the bondage of the devil, by the evidence of a useful and holy life. Give us repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that we may recover ourselves out of the snare of the devil, who are naturally taken captive by him at his will. May we be strong in thee, and in the power of thy might. Taking to ourselves the whole armour of God, may we be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. We thank thee, heavenly Father, for thy goodness towards us throughout the day which is now drawing to a close. Pardon, we pray thee, whatever thou hast seen amiss in us, for in many respects we have erred and come short. Take us under thy protection during the watches of the night; grant us needful refreshment; and spare us to see and to enjoy a new day. May we pass the remainder of our days in thy fear, and may we die in thy favour, for the sake of the Lord Jesus, for whom we bless thee, and to whom, with thee, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, one God, be ascribed equal and eternal praise. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXVI.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS XVII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—7. The miraculous supply of water from the rock in Horeb, again teaches that trials must be expected; that murmuring under such trials is very sinful; and that the Lord will certainly provide, by his providence and grace, all that is needful for his people in their progress; in particular, that he invites them to partake abundantly of the refreshing blessings that flow from a Saviour's love, saying, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters.' Ver. 8—14. The contest with Amalek, teaches that God's people have to struggle against spiritual enemies; that they should exert themselves in the contest with all their might; and yet, that their success depends solely on divine assistance, for which they should continually look in answer to prayer, and through the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ver. 15, 16. God's interposition in favour of his people ought to be kept in grateful remembrance, and to him the whole praise of success should be ascribed.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us go on in every thing 'according to the commandment of the Lord,' as we can gather it from his word, and the leadings of his providence, in dependence on his teaching; and we shall find that he will order our footsteps and delight in our way. And yet, though moving at his command, and plainly in the way of duty, we are not to calculate on exemption from trouble; on the contrary, he may allow us to be temporally and spiritually in want, that he may keep us entirely and sensibly dependent on himself, and may get the greater glory in relieving us. Let us beware of murmurings against the Lord on account of our straits. Let us look patiently and believingly to him, and he will provide necessary refreshment both for our bodies and for our souls, according to his own gracious promise, 'When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.' Enjoying the full light of the New Testament, let us carefully observe and improve the typical import of this miracle, and its evangelical application. 'Our fathers did all drink the same spiritual drink,' says the apostle to the Corinthians, 'for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ.' The rock was a type of Christ, and the water, of the blessings of his salvation. As the rock was smitten by the rod of Moses, so Christ was smitten by the sword of divine justice, when he bore the curse of the law for us. Blood and water flowed out when his side was pierced by the soldier's spear; striking emblems of pardoning and regenerating grace. If we would partake of these blessings, let us believe in his name, and rely habitually on his

grace, according to his own words, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.' As Amalek met the Israelites by the way, when they were come forth out of Egypt, and smote the hindmost of them, even all that were feeble behind them, when they were faint and weary, (Deut. xxv. 17.) so Satan and the world will often set upon us in an unexpected, unprovoked, treacherous, cruel, and dastardly manner: against this we should study to be on our guard; and, whether they assault us in that way, or more openly and boldly, we must fight the good fight of faith, and resist them with all our might. While our hands are stretched out to God in prayer, we shall always be successful, but if our hands turn heavy, and we cease to pray, Amalek will prevail—every spiritual enemy and every evil propensity will gain ground. Let us always pray, and not faint. Let us also praise the Lord for every advantage we gain; and according to the genius of the gospel, let us set up an altar in our hearts, and let every one of us prosecute this holy warfare under the captain of salvation, and under the standard Jehovah-nissi, the Lord is my banner. Our enemies are defeated, but they are not entirely put down. We must make no league with Amalek, no compromise with sin. Let us maintain the conflict to the last, and then the triumph will be complete.

PRAYER.

Blessed be thy name, O heavenly Father, for the fellowship with thee and with thy Son Jesus Christ, with which thou favourest all thy believing people. Blessed be thy name for the refuge and help they find in thee. Let thine ear be ever open to our cry, and let thine eye be ever upon us for good. Should all things appear to be against us, and all our means of deliverance fail, be thou our present help in the time of trouble. To thee all things are possible; and when thou beginnest to work, difficulties disappear, and sorrows are dissipated. For ever blessed be thy name, if thou hast given us to know thee as our reconciled God, to accept of thy salvation, and to find rest under the shadow of thy wings. Thou knowest, O Lord, our need of refreshment in this our journey through the wilderness of life; thou knowest all the wants of our bodies, and all the longings of our souls. In both respects do thou supply us; in both respects may bread be given unto us, and may our water be sure. O let us not mistake the true nature and the true source of consolation; let us not be guilty of the sin and folly of forsaking thee, the Fountain of living waters, and hewing out to ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. O God, thou art our God, early will we seek thee: our soul thirst for thee, our flesh longeth for thee in this dry and thirsty land, where no water is. We stretch forth our hands unto thee. Hear us

speedily, O Lord; our spirits fail: hide not thy face from us, lest we be like them that go down into the pit. O satisfy us early with thy goodness. Lord, give us living water, that drinking thereof, we may never so thirst again, but that it may be in us a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. Carry us on safely, we beseech thee, quite through this desert; and bring us at last to the place where we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on us, nor any heat: for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed us, and shall lead us unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. But, O Lord, we would not forget that we are yet in the wilderness, and exposed to the assaults of many enemies. In the name of our God we will set up our banners. Lord, hear us in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend us, and save us, and give us the victory. We beseech thee, O Lord, more particularly to defend us from all the dangers, both temporal and spiritual, to which we may be exposed, and to assist us in all the duties to which we may be called, during the day on which we are now entering. While we bless thee for thy care during the night, we implore the continuance of thy favour. Our voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will we direct our prayer unto thee, and will look up. May we walk in the light of thy countenance; in thy name may we rejoice all the day. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O our God. Lord, accept of our imperfect services, and grant us an answer in peace; in the name, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LXVII. 8.

SCRIPTURE—MARK IX. 30—50.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 30—32. It is an important point in the evidence of the gospel that the Saviour's death and resurrection were distinctly foretold, though it was long ere his disciples understood his declarations with regard to these events. Ver. 33—37. Humility is true greatness. This part of the passage is also conclusive against the alleged supremacy of Peter; for now a call was made on our Lord to assert that doctrine, had it been true, whereas he answered in such a way as entirely to quash the idea of supremacy in any of the apostles. Ver. 38—40. Those who seem to honour Christ are not to be

hastily condemned by us because they may not altogether agree with us. We should be glad that his cause is promoted by whatever instrumentality. Ver. 41, 42. The Lord will acknowledge and reward services, and severely punish injuries done to his own people. In ver. 43, 45, 47. the necessity of self-denial, and the renunciation of all sin, is put in a very strong light. In ver. 44, 46, 48. the doctrine of the eternity of the future punishment of the wicked is clearly taught in the same words thrice repeated. And finally, while the same general truth is taught in the two last verses of the chapter, the inevitable doom of apostates is particularly shown.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

What the disciples did not understand in our Lord's predictions of his death and resurrection, we now see illustrated in the light of actual fulfilment. How wonderful the love he manifested in dying for us! and what encouragement have we to rely on his atonement and to glory in his cross! In his resurrection, let us ever see the grand proof of his divine mission, and the pattern and pledge of the happy and glorious resurrection of all his followers. As there are still many things which we do not understand, let us not be afraid to ask him: but let us inquire in his word, and pray for the teaching of his Spirit; and he will guide us into all truth. How unseemly are pride and affectation of superiority in the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, whether they be ministers, or hearers, of the word! Our place before God is the dust. And if we would be prepared for any true dignity, we must be converted and become like little children,—we must become humble and teachable. Let us be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another. Let us be careful to exercise charity towards all who hold the Head, even Christ, though they may not exactly walk with us, or belong to our denomination. Let us not seek to stop, or thwart their exertions in the cause of religion; but let us remember how the apostle Paul said, 'What then? in whatever way Christ is preached, I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.' And, though some may not be so far advanced as we are, let us beware of driving them away, or irritating them, by harshness. Let us also beware of doing any thing to offend, or stumble, any of Christ's people, however weak. How awful the idea of eternal misery! Surely the sinners in Zion may well be afraid, and fearfulness surprise the hypocrites. 'Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' How awful to think, that instead of being consumed by the fire of God's wrath, the wicked shall be preserved by it, and continue immortal in the midst of it! Surely no anxiety to escape so tremendous a doom can be too great. Let us be thankful that a way is opened up for our escape; for, God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have everlasting life.

PRAYER.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, who art, and who art to come; thou art worthy to receive glory, and honour, and power,

for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they exist, and were created. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy, and all nations shall come and worship before thee. All thy works praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints bless thee. We will speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men thy mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of thy kingdom. Thou, O Lord, madest us that we might promote thy glory, and be perfectly happy with thee; and glory be to thy name! though we have rebelled against thee, thou hast provided a way for our restoration to thy favour. We confess and deplore before thee our great sinfulness by nature and practice. Behold, we were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mothers conceive us. Our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. We have done the things which thou hast forbidden, and we have left undone the things which thou hast commanded; so that there is no spiritual health in us. God be merciful unto us, sinners. See, O God, our shield; look upon us in the face of thine Anointed. Blot out our manifold offences, for the sake of him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. Lord, humble us under thy mighty hand, that we may be exalted in due time. Teach us true humility, both towards thyself, and towards our fellow-creatures. Give us a right and charitable frame of spirit towards all men. May we be ready to do good to all, as we have opportunity, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Lord, sanctify us by thy Holy Spirit, and form us more and more after thine own image. Convince us of the absolute necessity of obtaining deliverance from the love and practice of sin, in order to escape the coming wrath. Deliver us from presumptuous sins, and from secret faults: let no iniquity obtain dominion over us. Save us particularly from the sins that most easily beset us, and enable us heartily to renounce them, though they may have been dear to us as a right hand, or a right eye. While we tremble at the thought, we yet acknowledge thy goodness, O Lord, in unveiling to us, in some degree, the terrors of the place where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Lord, avert from us a doom so insupportable. Lord, save us from going down to the pit, for thou hast found a ransom. Lord, enable us to flee for refuge to the Saviour. Whatever else thou deniest us, deny us not thy grace; take not thy Holy Spirit from us. Of whatever else we may come short, let us not

come short of heaven. We offer thee our united thanks for thy goodness to us during the day. It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High; to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night. Deliver us from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, as well as from the arrow that flieth at noonday. May we lay ourselves down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest us to dwell in safety. While we sleep, let no plague come nigh our dwelling; and may we awake in the morning to sing of thy mercy. Our waiting eyes are towards thee, O Lord. Hear in heaven, the habitation of thy holiness. When thou hearest, forgive, and send us an answer in peace, for the sake of Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 33—37.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS XX.

REMARKS.

The law thus given from Sinai, was the same which originally had been written on the fleshly tables of the human heart. It was no new discovery of the divine will, but the republication of that same rule by which man had been bound from the beginning. The fall of Adam, and the consequent corruption and depravity of our nature, had effaced from the human soul both the knowledge of God's law, and the disposition to obey it. And now that, in his infinite wisdom and adorable mercy he had chosen, and was proceeding to set apart a peculiar people, 'to prepare the way of the Lord,' it was fitting and necessary that the *moral* law, forgotten and despised, should be proclaimed anew, so that the terrors of its threatened condemnation might prove a schoolmaster to lead men to the Saviour, of whom Moses in the *ceremonial* law was inspired to write.

PREFACE TO THE LAW.—In the giving of a law, the first point to be determined is the authority from whence it proceeds. In the preface, accordingly, to the ten commandments, we find the authority of the lawgiver explicitly asserted in these solemn words; 'I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.' Here there are three separate grounds enumerated, on which the giver of the law demanded the obedience of the Israelites. 1. I am 'the Lord,' that is, the sovereign Ruler of the universe, to whom alone it rightfully and inalienably belongs to require the submission of all creatures, and to prescribe the rule according to which it shall be rendered. 2. I am 'thy God,' that is, the God to whom, as a people, they were so especially bound, having been received into covenant with him, through their father Abraham; and being therefore under an express oath of alle-

giance to do his will. 3. I am the God 'which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage;' that is, the merciful and gracious Being who had distinguished them by special tokens of his love, pitying their sorrows and sufferings under the hard bondage of Egypt, bringing them out with a high hand, and with a stretched out arm, and leading them towards the rich inheritance he had promised to their fathers. The first reason for demanding their obedience was one of sovereignty, the second of covenant allegiance, the third of national and personal gratitude.

It is obvious that these reasons for keeping all the commandments of this law remain, not merely in the same, but in augmented force. He is still the same sovereign Lord of heaven and earth: to whom alone belongs the dominion and the power. As professedly belonging to the spiritual Israel, brought into a covenant relation to him through his Son Jesus Christ, we are avowedly under a special obligation to do his will; and as the redeemed of the Lord, ransomed by the amazing price of Christ's precious blood, we are not our own; and by the ties of the deepest and liveliest gratitude, are bound to make it our meat and our drink to do the good pleasure of the Lord.

FIRST TABLE OF THE LAW.—With regard to the law itself, which on these grounds demands our unqualified obedience, it is divided into two parts or 'tables' as they are commonly called; the former comprehending what relates to our duty to God, and the latter what relates to our duty to man. In the table prescribing our duty to God, there are four separate commands. The first refers to the object of worship, the second to the means of worship, the third to the manner of worship; and the fourth to one of the chief times of worship.

1. We must worship the Lord our God, and him only must we serve. Whosoever any creature has the chief place in our hearts, we commit idolatry. And as his eye seeth under the whole heaven, that sin wherever men are guilty of it, is aggravated by the fact, that it is done 'to his face.' 2. We must worship God in his own appointed way, and in no other. To worship him by means of images is expressly, and with peculiar emphasis, forbidden; as that by which he holds himself specially dishonoured. 'He is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' 3. We must worship him with deep reverence and holy awe, remembering that he is clothed with infinite majesty and honour, and that we are unworthy to take his great and fearful name into our polluted lips. All levity, and much more, all profanity, in the use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, or works, is forbidden under this solemn sanction; that though men may regard this sin with indifference, God, who is jealous of his own glory, will not suffer it to go unpunished. 4. That while our obligation to worship God as individuals, and as families, returns with every returning day, we are required to make a more solemn and public expression of our homage, by ceasing one day in seven from our ordinary secular pursuits, and devoting that day exclusively to the public and private exercises of devotion. The command on this point enjoined the Israelites 'to remember the sabbath,'

implying that the institution existed previous to the giving of the law from Sinai. It declares, that on the seventh day, God himself had rested from all the works which he had created and made; thus lending the high authority of his own example to the holy rest, for which, from the beginning of the world, a seventh portion of man's time is authoritatively and immutably required. The seventh day sabbath reminded man of his Maker; but the first day sabbath, observed since the resurrection of Christ, in compliance with the example and authority of his inspired apostles, reminds us of the yet more gracious character in which he is revealed in the gospel, the Saviour of sinners, the Redeemer of a lost world. The sabbath indeed was 'made for man,' expressly for his benefit; and therefore, as our Lord hath clearly taught, is not to be understood as prohibiting those works of necessity and mercy which the interests and the welfare of human nature require, even on the sabbath, to be performed. We must, however, cautiously beware how we draw this exception beyond its just and intended limits.

SECOND TABLE OF THE LAW.—Of all fellow men, our parents have the first and most sacred claim on our love, and God has taught us to recognise and reverence that claim as it deserves, by putting the command respecting the duty of children towards their parents at the head of the second table of this holy law. Turning from the domestic circle to the world around, the succeeding commandments arrange the duty we owe to our neighbour,—and every man is our neighbour,—under these separate heads; our duty stated in the sixth commandment towards our neighbour's person; we are not to kill the body, not to take life unlawfully, nor to do any thing tending to injure it. In the seventh, towards our neighbour's chastity, we are straitly forbidden to say or do what, from its impure and polluting character, may tend to corrupt and destroy the soul. In the eighth, towards our neighbour's property, we are not unjustly to invade or injure it. In the ninth, towards our neighbour's reputation, we are not falsely or maliciously to defame it. And lastly, and what constitutes a safeguard against the breach of all the preceding commandments, we are not to covet. Out of the heart are the issues of life; and it is by prayerfully keeping our hearts with all diligence, watching and subduing all inordinate motions or affections, towards our neighbour and all that is his, we shall be kept through divine grace from running into the open violation of any of these commands. This last command is furthermore an impressive intimation of the extent and spirituality of the divine law, as taking cognizance not only of our external conduct, but of the very thoughts and intents of our hearts. It is needful to observe, that while all the commands of the second table, with one exception, are put in the form of prohibitions, they bind us actively to do the contrary of what is forbidden. To say, 'Thou shalt not do this,' is to say, 'Thou shalt do the opposite: thou shalt not bear false witness, that is, for example, thou shalt 'every man speak truth with his neighbour.' Thus not only binding us to abstain from evil, but positively 'to do good unto all men as we have opportunity.' The 'fulfilling' of

all this law, the principle which at once prompts and ensures true obedience is love,—love to God in Christ, and love to man for his sake. For the sum of all these commands is this; ‘thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind: and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’

The terror of the Israelites, when the Lord thus manifested his presence on Mount Sinai, and their anxiety that Moses might stand between them and God, reminds us of our need of a Mediator; of our unfitness to stand before God on any merits of our own. While the command which was given to Moses to make a plain and simple ‘altar of earth;’ or if of stone, at least not of ‘hewn’ stone, was evidently intended as an additional safeguard against idolatry, which delighted in the splendour of its altars, and of its graven images.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, thou art very great, thou art clothed with majesty and honour. Thou art the maker and preserver of heaven and earth. Thou alone art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. Thou art the sovereign Ruler of the universe, to whom every knee should bow, and every tongue confess. Thou art our God, and thou hast been our fathers’ God. Thou art the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom thou hast loved us with an everlasting love. O impress our minds with just views of thy glorious perfections, and fill our hearts with a deep and abiding sense of thy great and undeserved mercy, in sending thy Son to visit and redeem our souls. Blessed be thy name, that thou hast laid help for us on one so mighty, and so willing to save. Wert thou to enter into judgment with us, we could not answer thee; by deeds of the law no living flesh shall be justified, for we have all sinned, and come short of thy glory. O that we may be found before thee, having not our own righteousness, which is of the law, and which is as filthy rags, but having the righteousness of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith; washed, and justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. But while we rejoice with humble and heartfelt gratitude, that we are not under the law, but under grace; we would remember that the law is holy and just, and good. O that we may obtain clear and solemnizing views of its extent, for it is exceeding broad; and of its spirituality, for it reaches to the very thoughts and intents of the heart. May it give us the knowledge of our sins, and thus prove a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth. May that love of God

which is the fulfilling of thy law, be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, that constrained by this divine principle we may learn more and more to deny ourselves to all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present evil world. May the fear of the Lord be before our eyes continually, that we may stand in awe, and not sin. May we be enabled to worship and serve thee, now, and at all times, with true hearts and right spirits. May we delight in all those ordinances of thy grace, which bring us into communion with God. May we especially account thy sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord and honourable, turning our foot away from whatever would profane it, not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasures, nor speaking our own words; that so we may delight ourselves in the Lord. May we be kindly affectioned one toward another; remembering this thy holy commandment, that he who loveth God, should love his brother also. May we have grace to cherish, and exercise all those domestic affections, which bind the family circle together in the bonds of mutual love. May we be holy in all manner of conversation in our intercourse with others. May we be enabled to do justly, and to love mercy, and to speak every man truth with his neighbour; whatsoever we would that others should do unto us, may we do so also unto them. Lord, let us not think that we have already attained, or that we are already perfect. But forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, may we press on towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God. And when at length he who is our life shall appear, may we also appear with him in glory. We are unworthy of the least of these thy mercies, but worthy is the Lamb who was slain for us. For his sake take away all our sins, and send us an answer of peace, and to thy name shall be all the praise, world without end. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXIV. 3—6.

SCRIPTURE—MARK X. 1—27.

REMARKS.

Nothing is more essential to virtue and piety, than purity in the relations of domestic life. It is there our minds receive the first, and strongest, and most indelible impressions. If therefore, corruption be allowed to establish its seat within that sacred circle, the very fountains of life are poisoned. And as it is out of the connection of husband and wife that all

other domestic relations spring, it is obviously of fundamental importance that this connection be so formed and regulated, as to command the respect and ensure the confidence of their children. Nothing can tend more powerfully to secure this important end, than the solemn recognition and enforcement of the doctrine taught in the opening verses of this chapter, as in the corresponding passage of Matt. xix. that marriage is a divine institution, an institution whose obligations cannot be violated without incurring God's righteous displeasure. To prove that the marriage of one man with one woman, in opposition to the loose and licentious views which prevailed extensively in the world, was God's own design and appointment, Jesus referred to the decisive fact, that from the beginning of the creation God made them a male and a female, a proportion between the two sexes which ever since has been most exactly maintained. And while this fact clearly condemned the polygamy of the heathen, it not less explicitly forbade the causeless or frivolous divorces prevalent among the Jews, which indeed were little better than polygamy under another name. In a state of innocence, such as that in which our first parents originally stood, the marriage tie would have remained for ever unbroken. Sin, by introducing death, created one sure means of dissolving it, and the evil lusts and passions of which sin was the fruitful source, soon must have produced many more. To the prevalence of the many gross irregularities which subsequently arose in a fallen world, in regard to the marriage state, is to be ascribed the permission which Moses gave the Jews to write a bill of divorcement, and to send a wife away. On account of the hardness of their hearts was this permission given. It was a liberty granted to prevent worse consequences among a people, who, from their previous habits and natural dispositions, could not safely have had a more rigid rule upon this subject imposed upon them. That permission, however, such as it was, they had stretched far beyond its intended limits. It was never designed to sanction separation, except for some weighty and important cause. Whereas they had wilfully perverted it into an authority for breaking asunder the marriage tie for any cause, however shameful or capricious. Under the perfect economy of the gospel, not only was no such license to be allowed, but as men were now to be favoured with a clearer revelation of the will of God, and addressed by more powerful motives to obedience, not even the permission given by Moses was any longer to endure. Marriage was to be invested with all the sacredness which it had in the beginning, and nothing but the sin of adultery would henceforth warrant man to separate those whom God had united. In thus restoring marriage, so far as that can be done in a fallen world, to its original basis, fencing it round with so many obligations, and guarding against its unlawful dissolution by so heavy a responsibility, our blessed Lord was laying a foundation for domestic peace and happiness, as well as for public virtue.

In an interesting connection with this subject follows the incident which the evangelist next relates, of the bringing of young children unto Jesus.

That incident, though it has no direct reference to infant baptism, yet bears upon it in a way greatly calculated to confirm and encourage parents in dedicating, through that solemn ordinance, their infants unto Christ. Nothing can be more clear from what took place on the occasion in question, than this, that even infants are capable of receiving Christ's blessing, and that this blessing he is willing and ready to bestow. Let parents seek that blessing for their offspring; not once only, at the baptismal font, but continually at a throne of grace. Let them, in their daily prayers, place their children anew as it were in the Redeemer's arms, and let them rest assured, he will not fail to prove that it was not in vain he said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me.'

From the case of children, we are led on by the inspired narrative, to the review of one of the most formidable temptations by which manhood is assailed. 'The love of money is the root of all evil.' How truly was that saying realized in this man, whose great possessions formed a barrier between his soul and the Saviour. In many respects his character seems to have been fitted to call forth affection and esteem, for we are told that Jesus looked upon him with feelings of more than ordinary interest. His natural dispositions were most probably amiable, and his general deportment attractive and engaging. But all this did not make him a child of God. With all that was so pleasing to the sensibilities of our nature, he was still loving and serving the creature more than the Creator. Like many other amiable men, he had no just or spiritual views of the true nature and malignity of sin; and was still, consequently, in the pride of his heart going about to establish a righteousness of his own. He was willing to do many things for God, but to abandon his rich possessions was a trial he had not contemplated, and for which he was unprepared. It is easy to serve God when his commands and our own inclinations chance to agree. It is when they come into collision, that the sincerity and the strength of our love to God are proved, and surely, if the riches of this world, ministering, as they do, so powerfully to pride, and carnality, and self-indulgence, are fitted to oppose so mighty an obstacle in our way to heaven, we have little cause to covet them. 'For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'

PRAYER.

Almighty and most merciful God, thou art the former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits; and great cause have we to make mention of thy loving-kindness in the morning, and of thy faithfulness every night. Assembled as we are anew around the domestic altar, we would remember that thou settest the solitary in families, and determinest the bounds of our habitations. We would praise thy name for the provision thou hast made for the welfare and happiness of mankind, by implanting within us those affections which bind us together, and by establishing and blessing all those endearing domestic relations, on which, in this life, our mutual

comfort so greatly depends. Grant, O Lord, that in all these relations, we may be found through thy grace faithful to each other, and faithful to thee; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, dwelling together in the unity of the Spirit, which is the bond of perfectness, living as heirs of the grace of life, and walking in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. Blessed be God for the abundant encouragement we have received, not only to come ourselves, but to bring even the young and tender, unto Christ our Lord. As we were all in infancy dedicated to the Saviour in the holy ordinance of baptism, may we be kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. Alas! how little have we realized the obligations which our early dedication unto God involved! we have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and are no more worthy to be called thy children. Lord grant unto us the grace of true repentance, that as we have done iniquity in the time past, we may do so no more. May we indeed have power given us through faith to become thy children, that day by day we may commit our way unto the Lord, and that night by night we may lie down trusting in the care and protection of our Father in heaven. And seeing, O Lord, that in this world we are beset on every hand with temptations and snares, let us not be high-minded, but fear. Lord, let not the cares of this life, neither the deceitfulness of riches, nor the lusts of other earthly things, enter in to entice us away from thee. May we learn to live above the world even while we are in it. Knowing that the fashion of this world passeth away, that here we have no continuing city, nor sure place of abode, may we have our treasure in the heavens, and our hearts there also; and by patient continuance in well-doing, be seeking for glory, honour, and immortality. May the love of God be so abundantly shed abroad in our hearts, that we may be ready at all times to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and to follow him who redeemed us, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood. May our souls be so filled with a sense of what he hath done and suffered for our sakes, that we may be ready to suffer the loss of all things for his sake, and to esteem even the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. And grant that, following him in the regeneration, through good report, and through bad report, we may at length be found meet for the inheritance of the saints. And when he who is our life shall appear, may we also appear with him in

glory. Hear us, good Lord, and when thou hearest forgive; turn not away thy face from us, neither our prayer from thee, and all that we ask is for Christ Jesus' sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 4—10.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS XXIV.

REMARKS.

The transaction recorded in this chapter is of a peculiarly solemn and important kind. God had chosen the Israelites, the seed of Abraham, for a peculiar people. The time had now arrived for establishing them in the inheritance he had promised to their fathers. And as their whole institutions and history were designed to be a figure or shadow of the kingdom of Christ, their relation to God was here confirmed by a covenant suitable to that design. They were no doubt temporal possessions and privileges which this covenant secured, but these were so ordered as to be typical of blessings spiritual and eternal. The manner accordingly in which the covenant was ratified, and the whole circumstances connected with it, were such as clearly pointed to the sacrifice and mediation of the future Messiah. The Lord had, immediately before, not only given forth that moral law which is binding upon all men, but, as the king of Israel, had published that judicial law according to which the Israelites, as a nation, were to be strictly governed. On their adherence to that law as a people were their national privileges to be suspended. And that they might be distinctly aware of the terms on which they were to be invested with the inheritance of Canaan, God gave instructions to Moses to prepare for a solemn public contract, by which the allegiance of the Israelites might be openly pledged to their covenant God. By the divine command he repeated to all the people the words of the law, and received their full and unqualified assent to what the Lord had enjoined. He built, moreover, an altar under the mountain, erected twelve pillars opposite to it, to represent the twelve tribes, and having offered sacrifices, he took the blood of the slain beasts, and sprinkled one half on the altar and the other on the people, that is, either on the elders, who appeared for the people, or on the twelve pillars which represented the tribes; Moses, as the typical priest, going between the altar and the people, and mediating between God and Israel in this solemn transaction. God thus bound himself to fulfil his promises to the people, while the people, in their turn, vowed allegiance to God. At the same time the blood of the sacrifices with which the covenant was ratified, proclaimed that the blessings promised were not of debt, but of grace; that divine mercy, propitiated by the blood of atonement, was the only ground of their title to those temporal blessings which were the appointed shadows of good things to come.

The incidents which followed are full of a meaning

which can be rightly explained and understood only by a reference to the spiritual and typical import which the whole transaction involved. It is recorded that immediately after the ratification of this covenant, Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, went up into the mount, and saw the God of Israel. Unspeakably glorious as was the manifestation of his presence which they beheld, it shook them with no terror. On the contrary, they were not only enabled to look upon it undismayed, but they did eat and drink while thus standing, as it were, before the unveiled countenance of Jehovah. When he appeared in awful majesty, on the same mount, at the giving of the law, the penalty of breaking through to gaze upon the Lord was death. Thereby teaching that by deeds of the law no living flesh shall be justified; that on the ground of his own righteousness no one could appear before God. But now that God had entered into a covenant of mercy with his people, and that they had embraced him as their God and their king, his justice, satisfied by the blood of sprinkling, had sheathed the sword of vengeance. They could now come unto God and live.

Even so the sinner in his natural estate of enmity and alienation, cannot think of God without the most agitating terror; the prospect of appearing before him is then nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. But when the blood of Christ has washed away his sins, instead of standing afar off and trembling with dismay, he has boldness to come unto a throne of grace; he is permitted to hold near and intimate communion with God as a reconciled God and Father, and to see his face in peace.

It is, however, of unspeakable importance to bear in mind that no mere external privileges, as members of the visible church, can ensure us of the divine favour. Though outwardly the people of Israel had joined themselves in a solemn covenant unto the Lord, we know that through unbelief, their carcasses fell in the wilderness. And in like manner how many are there still who avouch the Lord to be their God, who take the memorials of the Saviour's sacrifice into their hands, and eat and drink at a communion table, as it were in his immediate presence, who all the while, in their hearts, are at as great a distance from God as ever, and to whom Christ, at his final coming, will testify and declare that he never knew them. Let none then rest in names, and forms, and professions. But let all bear in mind, that not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, for that, if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, thou art the high and the lofty One who inhabitest eternity, and whose name is holy. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon sin. The heavens are not clean in thy sight. Thou chargest thine angels with folly. How much more abominable and filthy is man, who hath drank up iniquity like water! We, O Lord, are all by

nature the children of wrath, even as others. We have committed two great evils; we have forsaken thee, the fountain of living waters, and we have hewn out for ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Our whole nature is corrupt; our minds are blinded through the ignorance that is in us; our hearts are depraved; there is no health in us. In us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. To do evil, indeed, we can, but to do good we have no knowledge. Even the good that we would, that we do not; but the evil that we would not, that we do. Blessed be God that we are not under the law, but under grace! Blessed be God for the rich provisions of a covenant of mercy; a covenant which is well ordered in all things and sure. In and through that covenant we rejoice to believe that thou art just, and the justifier of the ungodly, who believe in Jesus. May the blood of that everlasting covenant be applied to our souls, that our guilt may be taken away; that the curse of a broken law may be forever removed from us, so that, whereas we were sometime far off we may be brought nigh through the blood of Christ. Receiving it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that he died for sinners, even for the chief, may we obtain peace through the blood of his cross, even peace with God. O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. Herein indeed was love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, sparing not his own Son, but freely giving him unto the death for us all. May that love of God, that perfect love which casteth out fear, be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, that so we may be encouraged and strengthened with humble confidence to draw near to thy presence, and to hold communion with thee as our reconciled God and Father in Christ Jesus. And, O Lord, may we find grace to walk worthy of that high vocation wherewith we have been called. May we live as becometh those whom God hath chosen out of the world, to be an holy nation, a peculiar people unto himself. Having avouched the Lord to be our God, having solemnly engaged that whatever others do, as for us and our house we will serve the Lord, may we come out from the world, and be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and give ourselves up, soul, and body, and spirit, as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service. May our life be, even now, hid with Christ in God; and when he who is our life shall appear, may we also appear with him in glory. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM IV.

SCRIPTURE—MARK X. 28—52.

REMARKS.

It certainly did not well become Peter or his brethren, to boast of their sacrifices in the cause of Christ. He who will not forget even a cup of cold water given to one of the meanest of his disciples, did not need to be reminded of what his followers had done for himself. But still with that patient and condescending kindness, which towards his disciples, amid all their failings, he so uniformly displayed, he was pleased to assure them they would have no cause to regret the choice they had made in forsaking all, that they might follow Christ. Even in this life, the outward losses the Christian may be called at any time to sustain in his Master's cause, are far more than made up by the abundance of those inward and precious consolations, which divine grace never fails to supply. But when he looks forward to another world, to the day when the wicked shall have ceased from troubling, and when the weary shall have rest from all their afflictions, and all their trials, he cannot but reckon with the apostle, that the sufferings of this present time are not once to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in God's people in eternity.

It is not improbable that the apostles, clinging as they still were, so closely to the hope that Christ was to set up a temporal kingdom, may have been too ready, at that time, to interpret these gracious promises of Christ as an encouragement to look for earthly honours in his service. There was, therefore, a peculiar fitness in his choosing that moment to lead them to the contemplation of his death. It was by the way of the cross, and by that way alone, Christ could reach the throne of his kingdom. And his followers must be contented to be conducted by a similar path—often through much tribulation, to enter into the kingdom.

This, however, is a conclusion to which human nature is most reluctant to come. Pride and self-indulgence recoil from a cross. Accordingly we find that so slow of heart were the apostles to learn the lesson their Master designed to teach them, that two of their number, still carnally longing after worldly distinctions, presumed to request that places might be assigned them, one on his right, and the other on his left hand, when he should come to his glory. They knew not what they were asking. At that moment they had no just views, either of the nature of his kingdom, or of the principles according to which its honours and rewards should be dispensed. There will be no favouritism, in determining the places men are to occupy in a future world. They will be assigned to those for whom they are prepared, for God will render unto every man according to his deeds. And how must the disciples have felt themselves rebuked by the thought, that while they had been presuming to bring forward their pretensions to places of prominence and superiority, their divine Master, so great, so good, so distinguished by every attribute that should command the grateful

homage of the world, had himself been among them 'as one that served,'—had come, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Of all the Saviour's miracles, so illustrative as they were of the great end and design of his mission, none, perhaps, is in all respects so appropriate, as that of his giving sight to the blind. The state of darkness, as to the natural world in which the blind live, is an impressive emblem of the spiritual darkness in which sin has involved the human soul. Christ came to be the light of the world, and his opening of the blind eyes was peculiarly significant of his giving saving light to them that were sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned. The Lord needed not only to open to us the scriptures; he needs also to open our understandings, to understand the scriptures. And while called to pray earnestly for that divine illumination,—that anointing of the eyes with the eye salve of the Holy Spirit that we may see, we may learn an important lesson from the case of Bartimeus, such as should encourage us to persevere in this prayer. If he does not grant our requests the instant they are preferred, it is not because he does not hear, but because he desires to prove our faith, to exercise our dependence, and to fill us with a deeper sense of the value of those blessings we come to implore. Blind Bartimeus cried loudly, and cried often, before Jesus seemed to be giving any heed to his supplication. But in the end he had his request and more; he sought a bodily and temporal blessing; *that* he obtained,—but he received along with it a blessing spiritual and eternal. It is thus that God often exceeds the utmost desires of his people's hearts. Let us then ask, and we shall receive; let us seek, and we shall find.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, thou art the hearer of prayer, and unto thee shall all flesh come. Blessed be thy name, for the freedom of access we enjoy to thy throne of grace, and for the sure promise we have received, that whatsoever things we shall ask in Christ's name, believing, we shall receive. Help us to ask in faith, believing that thou art, and that thou art the rewarder of them that diligently seek thee. O Lord, do thou impress our minds with a deep and abiding sense of the preciousness of Christ. May we account all other things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of the Saviour; may we feel that all other things are less than nothing and vanity, compared with winning Christ, and being found in him. Under this conviction, may we be ready to follow him through good report, and through bad report; to take up our cross, to deny ourselves, and to go after Jesus. And grant, that we may be daily growing up into him in all things, who is the head, that we

may attain to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. May we take his yoke upon us, and learn of him who was meek and lowly of heart; putting on bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, that so men may have cause to take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. Forbid, O God, that we should think we have already attained, or that we are already perfect. This one thing may we do, forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, may we be ever pressing on towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. And instead of proudly and self-complacently assuming a right to thy favour, may we feel that we are less than the least of all thy mercies, and that it is only because thy compassions fail not that we are not consumed. Truly we are unprofitable servants. We have done the things we ought not to have done; we have neglected those things it was our duty to do. Good Lord, sanctify to us all the trials and vicissitudes of our earthly pilgrimage. When oppressed at any time with afflictions, may we learn to look unto Christ, who endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens. And grant, heavenly Father, that we may be apt to learn those lessons of heavenly wisdom which the dispensations of thy providence towards us may be fitted and designed to teach. May we walk before thee as children of the light and of the day, committing our way unto the Lord. In thy light may we see light clearly, and rejoice in the hope of thy glory. Forgive, O Lord, the sins of this day, and of all our days. We thank thee for the goodness and mercy, thou art still making to follow us. May we lie down this evening and take quiet rest; may no plague come nigh our dwelling, and at whatever time we awake, may we be still with God. Let thy mercy, O God, be still on us, as we hope in thee. And to thy name, in Christ Jesus, shall be everlasting praise. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 5—8.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS XXXII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The conduct of the Israelites at the foot of Sinai, reminds us that a spiritual worship is not congenial to the human heart, that carnal man is constantly

corrupting true religion, by altering, adding to, or taking from it, with the view of accommodating it to his own passions. Ver. 5. It is worthy of being carefully considered, that the feast held at the making and setting up of the golden calf, was declared to be a feast to Jehovah. They thus professed to worship God by means of the golden image, not to worship the image itself. It was used by them 'merely as a help to their devotions,' just as the Roman Catholic uses images, 'to help his devotions;' yet the Lord declared their conduct to be idolatry, and he abhorred and treated it accordingly. Thus all use of images in his worship is an abomination to the Lord. Nothing is more offensive to God, or more ruinous to mankind, than to misunderstand and misrepresent his character, and pollute his service. This is the fountain of all evil in the world. Men like not to retain God in their knowledge, and he gives them up to vile affections. Ver. 10, 14. In regard to his designs and dealings, God often speaks to us after the manner of men; as when he threatens to punish, and then repents of his purposes, and turns from them. Such language describes the change in his outward dealings, but intimates no change in his secret counsels. Ver. 19. The manner in which Moses broke the tables of the law, intimates that the Israelites had, as we all have, broken the law itself. Ver. 11—13. The promises of God to his people, the works already performed in their behalf, and the reproach which their ruin, however deserved, would bring upon his cause, and such like arguments, are suitable and powerful in the mouths of those who are interceding for the church. Ver. 20. Sinners shall be made to eat of the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices. Ver. 21—24. The excuses offered for sin, are to the last degree, weak and untenable. Ver. 25—29. In times of general defection, the few faithful among the many faithless, shall have high honour, as well as trying duties put upon them; and they must not shrink from doing the Lord's work, at whatever sacrifice. Ver. 30—32. A devoted servant of God is ready to make every sacrifice but that of his soul's salvation, for the spiritual welfare of those to whom he is endeared by the ties of kindred or of grace. Ver. 33—35. Though the Lord forgives his erring people, he still chastens them for their sin, to keep it in remembrance, and to make them walk humbly all their remaining days upon the earth.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

It is a melancholy fact regarding the church of God, regarding the separate sections of the church, and regarding almost every individual believer, that short and passing seasons of revival have been almost always followed by speedy backslidings and decays. How astonishing to contemplate the vanishing nature of the impressions made on most of us by all the sacred ordinances which we observe, and by all the solemn and instructive events of divine providence towards us. We read, or hear the word, and forget it. We confess our sins to God, and go away to commit them over again. We dedicate ourselves to his service, and give ourselves up to the practice of sin. We even sit at his holy table, and then return with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow

that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. We recover from affliction, and still trifle with eternity. We see death ploughing down our neighbours, and friends, and still do not consider our latter end. The Lord alone can fix our hearts in his service, and make them right with himself, and steadfast in his covenant; he only can keep our affections set on things above.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art the King of glory. Thou art clothed with light which no man can approach unto, and live. We thank thee for the revelation which thou hast given of thy character and will, both in the works of thy hand, and in the word of thy grace. We especially praise thee for having made thyself known to us, as God, in Christ, reconciling us to thyself, and not imputing our trespasses unto us. We lament that such slight and passing impressions have been made by these discoveries, on our minds. Our understandings are still darkened by error and sin. Our hearts are awfully dead to the awakening truths of thy word. We remain strangely insensible of our condition toward thee, and the eternal world. There is in us a mournful want of true relish for thy service. And even when we draw near to thee with our mouths, and honour thee with our lips, our hearts continue, or soon depart, far from thee. After all our approaches to thy throne of grace, and all the manifestations given to us of thy glory, and all the professions which we have made of repentance, and love, and new obedience, we have been still turned aside by a heart that is deceitful above all things, and grievously infirm, and we have straightway forgotten all thy mercies, and all our solemn engagements to be thine. Lord, enter not into judgment with us. Let it repent thee concerning thy servants. Satisfy us early with thy mercies. May we know and see, that it is an evil and a bitter thing, thus to have forsaken the Lord our God. Humble us under thy mighty hand. Exalt us in the righteousness and strength of Jesus. Blessed Redeemer, we look to thee to enlighten us by thy word and Spirit, to give us peace through the blood of thy cross, to purify our heart by the inworking of thy grace, to save us by thy mighty power from the hand of all our enemies. Lord prevent us from attempting to serve thee longer with a double mind. Give us truth in our inward parts. Bring us over to thy side; that we may no longer try to serve God and mammon, and continue halting between two opinions; but follow thee fully, and serve thee in sincerity and truth. O Lord, enable us to keep our hearts with diligence, for out of them are the issues of life. Set a watch before the door of our lips, that we offend

not against thee. May we ponder the path of our feet, and be companions of them that fear thee. Be at our right hand, and at our left, that we may not be moved; may we live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit. Dwell within us O holy and gracious Sanctifier and Comforter, that we may live every hour for eternity, and be found meet for the kingdom and glory of the Lord. We pray for thine own blessing to each member of this family, for abundant grace to all the families of thy people, for comfort to the afflicted, succour to the tempted, and eternal life to those who are passing through the valley and shadow of death. We pray for the coming of thy kingdom of grace in the hearts of all men, that thy will may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. And now, Lord, receive us graciously and love us freely, accept our thanksgivings for the mercies of the past night, and of this morning. Keep us in thy fear throughout this day. Preserve us by thy mighty power through faith unto salvation, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXIV. 3—6.

SCRIPTURE—MARK XI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1. In describing where and how the disciples would find a colt ready for his use, Jesus showed both his omniscience and his power over the hearts of men. His entrance into Jerusalem displayed his steadfast love to his Father, and to his own people, in not shrinking from the sufferings awaiting him; his humility in the outward circumstances in which he was contented to appear; and, at the same time, his glory in the homage which he received from the applauding and enraptured multitude. Ver. 9, 10. The term *hosanna* means, 'Save, we beseech thee.' The hosannas with which the people welcomed and accompanied Jesus, at his entrance into Jerusalem, were an acknowledgment that he was the long expected Messiah, Saviour, and King. Ver. 11. He entered the temple as one that claimed supreme authority over it, as he, in fact, to whom it belonged, and who had long been worshipped in it. Ver. 15. And next day, having gone into it again, he repeated the act which, Matthew seems to say, he performed also the day before. (Matt. xxi.) He cast out of it, and cleansed it from, the buyers, and sellers, and money changers, who had turned it into a house of merchandise, and a den of thieves. And he thus purified his temple, to show his authority and intention to make a speedy and effectual reformation of his church on earth. Ver. 14. By cursing the barren fig-tree, Jesus warned his disciples of the doom about to overtake the unbelieving Jews, and all fruitless

professors in his church. Ver. 20—23. He instructs them that by faith they too might do even greater works, even remove mountains. Ver. 24. Such power from God, however, was to be expected only in answer to fervent and believing prayer. Ver. 25, 26. And no prayer could be heard, unless those who offered it showed their conscious unworthiness, their conscious need of mercy from God, whom they had offended so greatly, by showing or cherishing a forgiving spirit toward any who might have offended them. Ver. 27—33. Great was the wisdom of Jesus' answer to those who questioned his authority. They dared not to deny that John had his commission to baptize from heaven. And yet they could not own the commission of John to be from heaven without admitting the force of John's testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus. When the enemies of Christ first determine to reject his word, and then seek plausible objections to it, instead of directly answering their unreasonable cavils, it is often better to point out some palpable inconsistency in their own sentiments or conduct, so as to shame them into silence, or even lead them to condemn themselves, and seek deliverance from the judgments which they have been provoking God to pour upon them.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us stand in awe of Jesus, who knoweth all things, and therefore searcheth our hearts, and trieth our reins. We ought also to adore him, as the king of glory and the prince of peace. Jesus is still walking up and down in the midst of his churches, to observe the character and conduct of those who fill them. Are we trees of righteousness, planted by his hand, and bearing fruit to his praise? or are we mere cumberers of the ground, barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord? As he came to his temple, and drove the buyers and sellers out of it, so he is coming again to shut out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity; and we cannot escape, unless we are now really spiritual worshippers, and living temples of God. This however we are, if we truly believe in God, and in his Son, Jesus Christ; if we live a life of prayer; and if we manifest our dependence on the mercy and grace of God, by showing a spirit of mercy and love to all around us. Instead of attempting to stand out in opposition to the will and gospel of Jesus, and to justify such enmity, let the language both of our hearts, and lips, and lives be, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Make me willing in the day of thy power, to serve thee in the beauties of holiness.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou rulest over all. The earth is thine, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein. All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. Lord, we bless thee and magnify thy name for coming into this world of sin and misery, and dwelling among us, God

manifested in the flesh. We bless thee for all the tokens thou didst give us of thy condescension and love as well as of thy greatness. O Father, we remember, with faith and thankfulness, the humiliation of thy Son, his works of power and mercy, his obedience unto death. We praise thee, O Lord Jesus, for having come in the name of the Lord to save us. Thou hast set up thy kingdom on the earth, and art gathering into it a faithful people. O establish thy reign of grace in our hearts, producing righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. This evening we look back on our past lives, and confess, with shame and sorrow, our procrastination, our backslidings, and our obstinate continuance in sin, the iniquity of our thoughts, and words, and actions, our unholy tempers and habits, our earthliness, and pride, and folly, our neglect of commanded duty, our commission of forbidden sin. We are little better than cumberers of the ground, and yet we beseech thee, merciful God, to spare us, till, by thy grace working in us, we recover strength before we go hence and be no more in this world. Great has been thy long-suffering toward us. Let it prove our salvation. Fill us with repentance and faith in Jesus. O may we seek thee with all our heart, and find thee as the hearer of prayer. Cleanse our hearts from every unholy passion which would separate between God and our souls. Spread the spirit of truth, and holiness, and peace through the church. So make thy way to be known upon the earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Have mercy on our kindred. Convert the unconverted among them, and bless, with increasing grace, and usefulness, and joy, such of them as do believe. Reward our benefactors. May they find mercy with the Lord in that day. Forgive our enemies, and dispose us to love them, and as much as lieth in us, to live at peace with all men. Draw near with thy compassion and effectual aid to the sick, and sorrowful, and dying. In the multitude of their thoughts, may they be visited and sustained by the consolations of thy Spirit. O look down in mercy on this house, and visit with thy salvation all its inmates. May we lie down in thy fear, and rest under the shadow of thy wings. And if thou art pleased to spare us through the sabbath that is so nigh, O may we not spend it so unprofitably as many have been spent, that are for ever gone; but may we spend it wholly in thy service, in private and in public, and so become meet to do and to bear thy holy will here, and to dwell in thy presence for ever. And all that we ask is only for the sake of Christ, our strength and Redeemer. Amen.

TENTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXII.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XXXII.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. That man, and that man alone, is truly and necessarily happy whose transgression is removed by the sacrifice of Christ, whose sin is covered by the blood of atonement, to whom the Lord no longer reckons iniquity, but rather manifests his mercy, and whose heart, delivered by divine grace from all malice, guile, hypocrisy, and envy, is right with God, and becoming steadfast in his covenant. Yet the blessedness of such a state is little felt, or valued and sought after by us. Most men are pining away in their iniquities, and contented to remain so. Ver. 3, 4. The wretchedness of the man who is wasted by the guilt and power of that sin which he is aware of, and yet refuses to acknowledge and forsake, is most strikingly and affectingly shown. How true it is that he who covereth his sins shall not prosper. This is the melancholy condition of not a few. They cannot go on at their ease in sin, and in departing from God, yet they will not return from broken and empty cisterns to the fountain of living waters. They keep silence, refusing to come to the throne of grace to spread out their whole case before the Lord, and plead for deliverance. And, therefore, their consciousness of guilt, and their fear of divine anger, continue pressing heavily upon their minds, extort from them many a fruitless groan, and make them feel as if scorched by the drought of summer. Ver. 5. In such circumstances of guilt and distress, the first step to peace is unreserved confession of sin. This leads to immediate, solid, and lasting tranquillity of mind. When we come to God in this manner, and pour out our heart before him, and make the Most High, the holy, the merciful One, our refuge, looking to him as 'God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,' then we experience a sudden and comfortable relief. We have peace through the blood of the cross, and begin to go on our way rejoicing. Ver. 6, 7. When we contemplate the graciousness of God, his readiness to pardon, as shown in his dealings with the repenting suppliant, we will, if we have any fear or love of God in our hearts, be induced and encouraged to come to him, in like manner, in our guilt, weakness, and distress, that we may, in our turn, taste and see that he is good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon him. And every one who thus flies into the 'strong hold,' that is ready to receive the 'prisoners of hope,' finds himself safe from all the evils which overwhelm the wicked, and praises the Redeemer for 'compassing him about with songs of deliverance.' Ver. 8. Such also have the promise and the experience of being guided, day after day, through all perplexities and dangers, by the word and Spirit; and are thus qualified to counsel and

help forward, in the way of life, their weak, ignorant, and erring brethren. Ver. 9, 10. A teachable, submissive, obedient frame of mind is indispensable, however, in the case of all who would experience this pardon, deliverance, direction, and peace. The unsanctified and rebellious in heart or life, must continue miserable, and lie down at last in sorrow, and make their bed in hell. They only who live, trusting and encouraging themselves in the Lord, shall be compassed about with his mercy at all times, and on every side. Ver. 11. Let, then, such as are accepted in the Beloved, and love him and his followers, with a pure heart, fervently, rejoice evermore in this testimony of their conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have their conversation in the world.

PRAYER.

O Lord, this is the day which thou hast made to keep in remembrance the finished work of Jesus, whereby he made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. He died for our offences, and rose again for our justification. By raising him from the dead on the morning of this first day of the week, thou hast given a perpetual testimony that his work, in behalf of all that believe, is accepted, and that in him they have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of thy grace. O Lord, we beseech thee, for Christ's sake, make us to know this day the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered; to whom thou imputest not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. Lord, we acknowledge that we have many a time restrained prayer, and refused to spread out our whole condition before thee. We have confessed our sins without forsaking them. We have prayed for thy favour and still cleaved for happiness to other things. O Lord, it is righteous in thee to hide from us the light of thy countenance, to deny us thy grace, and to leave us under guilt and corruption, while we trifle with thy majesty and holiness, and regard iniquity in our hearts. We bless thee that when we confess our sins, thou art faithful and just to forgive them, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We come before thee, this morning, O Lord, to pray that we ourselves may be enabled to see and confess our real state and character in thy sight. We would pour out our hearts before thee, and make the Most High our refuge. We would seek thee while thou art to be found, and call upon thee while thou art near. We would forsake every wicked way and every unrighteous thought, and return to the Lord for mercy and abundant pardon. We draw nigh to thee, O Lord, to con-

fess our sins. Draw nigh to us to forgive them. Fill us with the spirit of repentance, as an evidence that thou hast granted us remission. Show us Christ's glory, as an evidence that the Father has revealed his Son in us, and accepted us in the Beloved. Melt down our hearts in thy presence, as an evidence that thou art sitting as a refiner and purifier over us. Fill us with longings after thee, as thou art seen by thy people in the sanctuary, and found in the ordinances of grace, that we may thus know that thou hast begun a good work in us, and wilt perform it until the day of Christ. Be graciously present with all the congregations of thy people this day. Clothe thy priests with salvation, and cause thy people to shout aloud for joy. Let this be a great day of the Son of man, a day of the Redeemer's power, to make many willing to serve him in the beauties of holiness. Enable us to keep it all holy unto thee. Preserve us from thinking our own thoughts, from finding our own pleasure, from speaking our own words. May this day be to us not a weariness, but a day of rest, a time of refreshing from thy presence. We pray, O Lord, for our friends. Impart thy grace to save their souls. We pray for our enemies. Forgive them. Fill us with a forgiving and charitable spirit. Heal the sick. Prepare the dying for eternity. And as we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth, O teach us to-day, while it is called to-day, to harden not our hearts, but to hearken to thy voice. Let this day be a time in which thou shalt be found of us, O Lord. Sanctify us in soul, body, and spirit for thy service. Pardon all our sins; and accept of our persons and services, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIII. 18.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XXXIII.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. God is the fountain of his people's joy. 'All our springs are in thee.' And it well becomes those whom he has not only justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, but by his indwelling Spirit rendered upright in heart and life before him, it well becomes them to spend their days, not in sorrow, but in gladness, not in unbelieving or unthankful mournings, but in holy and grateful praise. Ver. 3. Singing the new song of the ransomed, for redeeming love, is to be their special exercise. The grounds of their praise are manifold. Ver. 4. The doctrines and commandments, the promises and threatenings of his word,

are all in harmony with one another, worthy of his absolute perfections, and suitable to our present condition and future prospects. And all his works, and providential dealings, are in perfect unison with his nature, purposes, and revelations. Ver. 5. In his word, and works, especially in his plan and work of redemption, we see mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissing each other. While for Christ's sake, the abundance of his temporal bounty has always filled, and the influences and evidences of his grace shall yet overflow the earth. Ver. 6. By the word of the Lord, and by the breath, or Spirit of his mouth, by the Son and Holy Spirit, Jehovah created the universe at first, is now creating men anew unto good works, and will at length supersede the whole present economy of things by the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Ver. 7. In the wonderful arrangements whereby the waters are kept within the ocean's bed, the Lord has displayed an understanding that is infinite. Ver. 8, 9. He by whom such mighty works are so easily performed, ought to be the object of all men's holy fear, especially when we consider how certainly he frustrates all those counsels which oppose his designs, and fulfils his own wise and holy purposes, in all ages. Ver. 12. How highly favoured were the ancient people in being under the special protection of this great Creator and Disposer of all things! How unspeakably happy are the people whom he forms into a spiritual nation, and interests in all the blessings of his redeeming love! Ver. 13—15. Let us remember that from his dwelling-place on high, he beholds, searches, and controls all the inhabitants of the earth. Ver. 16—17. Let us remember also, that safety cannot be found in any earthly resources, or refuges, such as the numerous armies, or personal strength, or horses used in war, in which such confidence was placed of old. Ver. 18, 19. It is in God alone that our help is found. Such as cherish a child-like reverence toward him, and hope in his mercy, are never lost sight of by him, are delivered from all evil temporal and spiritual; and often, when outward means of safety fail, are wonderfully preserved to the glory of his name. Ver. 21, 22. The saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, are thus induced to look to God, and wait for him that both in his daily providence, and by the visitations of his Spirit, he may guide them in perplexity, strengthen them in difficulty, and save them from danger, and visit them with his mercy.

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, we come before thee on this evening of thy holy day, to thank thee for the opportunities which we have had, of waiting on thee, in the public and private exercises of thy worship. Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound. May we be of that happy number. We mourn the weakness of our faith, the coldness of our love, the vanity of our minds, and the earthliness of our conversation. In all things we come short of thy glory. In many things we greatly offend against thee. Yet to

whom can we go, but unto thee. O Lord, thou only hast the words of eternal life. May we now have access unto thee through Jesus by the Spirit. Fill us with all joy and peace in believing, and cause us to abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost. Remember not against us former iniquities, O Lord. Remember us rather with the favour which thou bearest unto thine own. O visit us with thy salvation, that we may see the good of thy chosen; that we may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that we may glory with thine inheritance. We would sing a new song unto thee for the salvation wrought out for us by Jesus, and now applied to the soul by the Holy Spirit. We praise thee, O Lord God, for the truth and righteousness, the wisdom and mercy, the power and sovereignty, displayed in creation and providence, and especially in the work of redemption. We would celebrate these thy perfections, with reverence and love, with faith and thankfulness. And we pray that these holy tempers and dispositions may be awakened and nourished in us and in others, by all the manifestations of thy glory, which thou hast given to us in the work of thy hands, and the word of thy grace. We magnify thy mercy and grace, O God of salvation, for all the good done this day to the souls of men. Let the ordinances that have been administered and observed, be still accompanied with an abundant blessing, for the conversion of sinners, and the building up in holiness and comfort, of all that believe. Fill the whole church of God on earth with the spirit of truth, and holiness, and unity. Regenerate this depraved and wretched world. Stand by, and render successful in their labours, thy devoted servants, who are preaching the gospel in distant lands. Hasten the time, when heathen idolatry, and Mahometan delusion, and Popish superstition, and Protestant lukewarmness, and the infidelity that abounds, alas, in countries called Christian, shall vanish before the Sun of righteousness, rising on all lands, with healing in his beams! Bless the land in which we dwell. May our earthly sovereign rule in thy fear, and be protected and prospered by thy favour. May all who are in authority over us have a spirit of judgment from the Lord of hosts, when they sit in judgment. Bless the ministers of Christ, and may their flocks hear and obey the voice of the good Shepherd. May parents train up their children in the ways of godliness. May masters give to their servants what is just and equal. May servants study to honour Christ in all things. Bless all who

are dear to us. Our relatives do thou bring within the bond of the covenant. Sanctify both their mercies and their trials for the good of their precious souls. Our friends and companions, whether around us, or in distant parts, we commend to thee and the word of thy grace. And for the house in which we dwell, we pray, that thy fear may be in every heart and before every eye. Our sabbaths are passing away; prepare us for the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Be our God and guide even unto death, and our portion for ever, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CIII. 8.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS XXXIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—6. What are all the blessings of the covenant to the Jew or to the Christian without the presence of the God of the covenant? What would the land of Canaan, although it flowed with milk and honey, have been to the Israelites, even if an angel had been sent to drive out their enemies, if the God of Israel refused to dwell there, and to cause the joy and glory of his presence to be realized? Would heaven be heaven to the man of God, would the New Jerusalem be the better country to the Christian, although its twelve gates were twelve pearls, and the foundation of its wall garnished with all manner of precious stones, and the street of the city pure gold, as it were transparent glass, although there the wicked ceased from troubling and there the weary were at rest, if the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were not its temple, if the glory of the Lord did not lighten it, and the Lamb whom he loves was not its everlasting light? What is heaven, what is earth, without the presence of him of whom the believer has learned to say, with all his heart, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee?' You see the punishment of the people's sin: 'I will not go up in the midst of thee.' 'Put off thine ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.' This, like the command to cover themselves with sackcloth, is a call to repentance. Ver. 7—11. Behold the fulfilment of the threatening of God. The tabernacle is put 'without the camp,' nay, 'afar off from the camp.' The tabernacle was not only the type of the 'tabernacle of God' in the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 3. but, like the temple, the residence of God, in which he manifested his glory, and admitted the people, through their mediator, to personal communion. Exod. xxv. 8.; xxix. 43, 45, 46. Ver. 12—17. Moses, who was alone treated as the friend of God, solicits, for the people's sake, the restoration of God's presence, and knowledge of God's 'way,' pleading God's own promise, 'Thou

hast said,' and God's covenant with the people, 'Consider that this nation is thy people.' God's answer is explicit and gracious, ver. 14. 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.' This is God's 'way,' in which he fulfils the promise of the covenant. Mark how different, in the end and in the means, from man's way. There is no other way which leads to 'rest,' and apart from God, without the presence of God, there is no solid, no soul-satisfying rest. Is not this enough? For himself, enough: 'I will give thee rest;' but Moses (ver. 15, 16.) sues for the people with himself. What a suit! Better to die in the wilderness than live even in the promised land without the presence of God! Who will now say that the Jews looked only to carnal things and temporal promises? Being in this also accepted he is emboldened to ask greater things than this. Ver. 18. 'I beseech thee, show me thy glory.' A petition worthy of the 'man of God.' The meekest, the most humble of men presents the highest, the boldest petition. But had not Moses already seen the glory of God? Had he not been forty days on the mount, and seen God there in a glory so transcendent and terrible that even he said, (Heb. xii.) 'I exceedingly fear and quake?' What, then, is the glory of God? Mark it well, sinners; hear God himself proclaiming the truth. Ver. 19. It is his goodness that is his glory; it is, you see here, in his goodness, his grace, his mercy, that he is glorious. As a lawgiver and as a judge, holy, just, and almighty, Jehovah is glorious, and it was the glory of his holiness, his justice, and his power, that Sinai in its terrors, addressed to the eye and ear, as well as in its proclamation of the law of righteousness unfolded; but it is goodness, inspiring not terror but love and confidence, it is grace, it is mercy, sovereign and free to all, attracting, winning, not repelling the worshipper, that is the proclamation of Jehovah's name, in which his glory is manifested in the covenant to sinners on earth. His glory is mercy meeting with truth or faithfulness, and righteousness kissing, consistent with peace. Psalm lxxxv. 9, 10. Ver. 20—23. All that man can see and live, Moses is permitted to see.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Behold the real source of blessedness or of misery, the enjoyment or the non-enjoyment of the presence of God. That is the real, the radical distinction between nation and nation, between church and church, between man and man. The world, the man of the world, cannot live with God; the flock of Christ, the man of God, cannot live without God. O God, withdraw not from us. 2. Learn the duty and the proper disposition of a nation, a church, a congregation, a family, or an individual deprived of the presence of God. Humbled before God, humbled to repentance, stripped of their ornaments, let them see what they have done, what God, unless they repent, is about to do. Is this our case? 3. If this be your condition or the state of those around you, without God, pray as Moses prayed. Let the example of Moses especially teach us two things. First, What we should ask, and how. 'Show me thy way,' the way of thy covenant, precepts, providence, people, peace. 'Show me thy glory' in thy

way, in thy Son. Second, How much we should expect to receive. Moses' effectual fervent prayer, for himself and for the people, availed much. How should we then pray in faith, now when Christ, 'the brightness of God's glory,' has died and risen from the dead, and the Spirit of Christ, who ever liveth to make intercession for us, is promised to reveal his glory, and his covenant and way to all that will.

PRAYER.

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, let our prayer be accepted in thy sight, for the sake of our Mediator and Intercessor within the veil. May his Spirit, promised to help our infirmities, teach us, assembled before thee this morning, what we should pray for, and how we should pray as we ought. We thank thee that in Christ thou hast revealed the brightness of thy glory to us, so that in Jesus, as he lived and died, we behold thee, the God of our salvation. O God, may we see our need of thy perpetual presence to guide and guard us in the right way, to lead us through the wilderness, give us victory over our enemies, and bring us, saved and made meet for glory, into the mansions in the land of promise, which Christ is preparing for saints. Above all, may our hearts be so moulded, according to the tenor of thy covenant, that we shall learn, in spirit and in truth, the prayer of Moses, the man of God, "Show me thy way. Show me thy glory. If thy presence go not with us, lead us not up hence." May we see, may we all remember this day, that it is by thy presence, and the mighty work of thy Spirit within us, that we are separated from the world, or enjoy the privileges or walk worthy of the vocation of the people of God. If we are deprived of the light of thy countenance, or see others around us living without God and without Christ in the world, let us not rest, let us give thee no rest, till we plead in faith the promises of thy covenant, and receive the answer of peace. Lord our God, may we be humbled to repentance, when we see so little evidence of thy peculiar presence in our own souls, in the lives of those around us, in our nation, or in the administration of the ordinances dispensed in thy church. In this spirit may we be stirred up to pray fervently, and watch and wait for the out-pouring of the Spirit from on high, the revelation of thine arm, and the manifestation of thy power. Accept our united thanksgiving for the rest of the night, and enable us, during this day, to live to thee and walk with thee, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 129.

SCRIPTURE—MARK XII. 1—27.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—12. You perceive that Christ is not contented to act on the defensive, or let the unconverted Jews and their rulers, when they were not immediately opposing his truth, alone. He speaks 'against them,' and so plainly that they see it is against them that his words are directed. The parable which predicts their rejection and destruction, is intended to intimate the causes of their punishment, their abuse of their peculiar privileges, maltreatment of the prophets sent to call them to repentance, and rejection of Christ. God, on account of their obstinate unbelief, gave the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles, bringing them into the place of the rejected Jews, whose opposition he thus made, in the depth of his wisdom, the means of accomplishing his purposes, fulfilling his prophecies, and manifesting his glory. So enraged were the chief priests and scribes, when they heard this parable, that if they had not been restrained by the fear of the people, they would have laid hold of Jesus, and dragged him to death. What they could not do by force they attempted by fraud. Ver. 13—17. If Jesus had said it is lawful to give tribute to Cesar, he must have excited the people to be his enemies, who would have considered him an impious traitor, betraying, like the Herodians, his country's liberty and the cause of God. The pharisees would then, with the people on their side, have effected his destruction. Had he said it is not lawful, the Herodians would have accused him to the Roman governor, as an encourager of sedition and rebellion. This was the dilemma. His answer, which shows that civil and religious rights do not interfere with one another, confounded and rebuked both the Herodians and the pharisees. Their plot was defeated: they could not lay hold of his words. Ver. 18—27. The sadducees, a sect of free-thinkers and free-livers, were the opponents of the pharisees on religious, as the Herodians were on political, grounds. Christ, while he annihilates their pretended objection, and exposes their gross ignorance, takes occasion to show that Moses, to whom they appealed, had taught that there is, after death, a future state of existence. In denying a future state and a resurrection, therefore, the sadducees were chargeable with fearful heresy and infidelity.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Mark, on the one side, the conduct of Christ toward the Jews, and let that be the example which you imitate in your intercourse with the world. By silence, if that had been prudence, he could have avoided their displeasure; but, with all the divine wisdom which shines so glorious in these interviews, he had too much love to the souls of sinners to lull them, even tacitly, by the manner in which he associated with them, into the delusion that they were, as they imagined, heirs of salvation. Hence he was hated, persecuted, crucified. If we do not contradict the world, if we conform to its course, if, by treating its votaries as our friends, we cherish the

damnable delusion that they are the friends of Christ and of God, it is not wonderful that we are not exposed to 'the contradiction of sinners,' that we are treated by the world as friends, or not treated as enemies. Such conformity to the world is denial of Christ. Never will the church be separated, as she ought to be, from the world, nor Christians like Christ, until the true members of the church show, on all occasions, their sense of the sin and misery of those who are not believers, who are without Christ, and their abhorrence of all that is opposite to Christian holiness. 2. Mark, on the other side, the treatment which Christ received from the world. Mark it, that in his sufferings you may behold his love, and expect the same treatment. It was deadly hatred which his conduct excited. This is still the spirit of the world toward Christ. How few have we among us who are not opposing and crucifying Christ; some in the spirit of the pharisees, others of the Herodians, others of the sadducees. 3. Mark what Christ says to these men, and through them to us. First, He denounces their doom unless they renounce the course of the world, and, repenting of their sin, receive him as their Saviour and Lord. To us the kingdom of God is preached by his servants. We are now the vineyard of the Lord. If we are like the Jews in their sin, despisers of Christ, our punishment shall be like theirs, and beyond theirs, tremendous. Secondly, He says, Render to God all that is God's, and to Cesar, 'the powers that be,' what is theirs. Piety and patriotism are never at variance, never separate. There is no patriotism without piety. Thirdly, Live not as the sadducees, but as one to whom life and immortality have been brought to light, as an heir of the kingdom of heaven, mortifying your members that are on the earth.

PRAYER.

God of grace, who hast loved us with an everlasting love, and given thy Son to be the propitiation for our sins, help us, this evening, to glorify thy name. We thank thee that thou hast, from the beginning, revealed thy name and will in the covenant of grace to the church, and above all, that in the fulness of time thou didst manifest thy love to the world, in giving thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. We believe that he was wounded for our transgressions. Lord, may the Spirit which he has promised to send forth, take of the things of Christ, revealed in thy word, and so reveal them to our souls that the love of Christ shall be shed abroad on our hearts. May we know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings. Enable us, while we profess to be his disciples, to imitate his example. In our intercourse with the world, may we walk as he walked. Let us not deceive ourselves by imagining that the offence of the cross has ceased. May we be prepared, as our Master, to experience the devil's temptations, and to meet that enemy

in the world, both as a roaring lion seeking to devour, and as a serpent to beguile and ensnare us. O give us grace, while we deal faithfully with sinners, to walk as Christ did in wisdom toward those that are without, and to be able always to render a reason of the hope that is in us. Impress the instructions of his word upon our hearts. May we see how precious are the privileges by which we are distinguished, and how great the national and personal responsibility connected with these. Enable us to render unto thee the things that are thine, and to those in authority over us the honour and obedience that is due. Let us realize the character of heirs of the kingdom of God; and while we live on earth, may we have our conversation in heaven. Forgive, for Christ's sake, the sins of this day. For thy goodness in providence we glorify thee with the gratitude of faith, and we pray that when we retire to rest we may be defended, during the night, from danger and temptation, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLV. 7.

SCRIPTURE—EXODUS XXXIV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—9. God is about to manifest his 'glory' to Moses, in answer to his prayer, and that manifestation he connects with the restoration of 'the tables of the covenant,' which were broken by Moses, when he saw the people worshipping their calf. Jehovah is here renewing his covenant with the people after their sin, and every word in the proclamation of Jehovah's name, as well as the outward circumstances, and the occasion of his appearance, proclaims, that it was the covenant of grace, into which he was entering with the Jews under the Old Testament, and the same which is revealed to us in the New. The gospel itself, as revealed in the New Testament, does not contain a more explicit and copious declaration of the grace of God; nor, if this proclamation is viewed as the answer to the prayer of Moses, a more emphatic intimation, in terms express and incontrovertible, that the glory of Jehovah, as revealed in the covenant, is the glory of his grace, in the light of which all his other perfections are magnified. Epithet upon epithet, each more expressive of grace than the preceding, is applied to Jehovah, in order to give the sinner full confidence in his love and willingness to save to the uttermost, and the chief of sinners encouragement to come and enter freely into covenant. The effect of the revelation of the glory of God to the soul is, as the example of Moses shows, to awaken desire, which is breathed in the prayer of faith, of the blessings of the covenant. Ver. 10—28. God's answer to the prayer of Moses is the covenant of which the promises and requirements

are here recited. On his part, he promises to drive out their enemies, and to manifest his presence and peculiar favour by a course of providence, which would be acknowledged to be his immediate work. These promises are urged as reasons for their obedience to his commandments; the ten commandments, which, with the others given here, are expressly declared, ver. 28. to be 'the words of the covenant.' This then is the light in which the ten commandments ought to be viewed. They are, like the precepts of the New Testament, the requirements of the covenant of grace, addressed to those who are partakers of the promises, and to be performed by a believer, knowing the name of Jehovah, as a service of love, of liberty, and of gratitude, to a reconciled God. Although the form of the revelation is different, it is the same covenant, both in the promises and in the commandments, that is addressed to us. Ver. 29—35. Moses returning from the sight of God's glory, was obliged to veil his face. It was the glory of Christ with whom he had held communion, that shone in his face. Christ was the glory of the Mosaic covenant, to those who saw the end from the beginning, (2 Cor. iii.) but there was a veil upon the heart of most of the Jews: their minds were blinded so that Christ was not recognized, and the true nature of the covenant, both in its promises and in its commandments, misapprehended and lost sight of.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. That veil referred to here, is done away in Christ. To us is revealed God, manifest in the flesh, in 'the brightness of his glory,' Jesus Christ. There you see God, unveiled as he is, in the infant of Bethlehem, the man who went about doing good and healing diseases, the man of sorrows, who, on the cross, to which he was brought by the malice of ungodly enemies, prayed for his murderers. In him behold your God. 2. In this glorious and gracious character, God is seen and heard proclaiming to us the covenant of grace. View both the promises and the commandments of that covenant in the light of Christ, the risen Saviour, the conqueror of the devil, the world, sin, and death. As the Canaanites, &c. were devoted to destruction, and the Israelites obtained an assurance of final and full possession of the promised land, so have you, by the resurrection of Christ your covenant head, an assurance of victory over all your enemies, and of eternal life, rest, and blessedness in the kingdom of heaven. Their enemies, wars, victories, possession of the land of promise, are the type and pledge of yours. It was by faith, by faith alone, that they fought and overcame. It is by faith, by a fight of faith alone, that you can overcome the world, or any of your enemies that are in the world. 3. Do you take the two tables of the law, as the words of the covenant, and see in these, as performed by Christ, the duty which you owe to Christ? He is your example and strength. In Christ you see love to God and man exhibited in perfection. That love is the glory of Christ; and that glory is, through the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, to be reflected in you. The more you know Christ, the more brightly will his image be reflected in you. The

man who sees his glory, becomes, through its transforming power, like Christ; he is 'a living epistle of Christ, known and read of all men,' that is, a Christian.

PRAYER.

God of grace, we adore thee as the God of glory, and bless thee that in this character, the proclamation of thy name to us is Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty. We would give thee eternal thanks, that thou hast manifested the glory of thy grace to us, in Christ thy Son, God manifest in the flesh. Enable us to behold him full of grace and truth, the Mediator of the new and better covenant, in which we are brought near to God, and have access, with boldness, into the holiest of all. Day by day may we behold, in his life and death, the grace and glory of the God with whom we have to do; that, comprehending with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, we may be filled, through the knowledge of it, with all the fulness of God. O may it be as a covenant God that thou art known, and contemplated in thy word, in thy works, and in thy Son; may every view of thy perfections endear to us both the promises and the commandments of the covenant. May the effect of our knowledge of Christ be the reflection of his image in our lives, so that we manifest the same supreme love to God and man which he exhibited, whose meat and drink it was to do his Father's will, and who laid down his life to save his enemies. God of our salvation, grant that we and ours may this day, and evermore, be living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men; different from the world in our faith, by which we overcome the world, and glorify thee in our several spheres by a labour of love and patience of hope, in our prayers, in which we hold sweet communion with thee, and in our progress from glory to glory, till in Zion above we appear before thee holy, and without blame in love. Accept our united thanksgiving for the rest of the night, and the blessings and privileges of which, in thy grace, we are this day partakers. Lead us in thy way, defend us from all our spiritual enemies, and give us grace to fulfil the duties and endure the trials to which we are called, so as to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. Bless the church with which we are connected, and all churches of Christ throughout the earth; and may it be the fervent prayer of our hearts, that thy name, O Father, may be

hallowed, thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CX. 1.

SCRIPTURE—MARK XII. 28—44.

REMARKS.

How varied and precious is the instruction conveyed in this portion of the word of life, in its application to practical purposes! Here is presented the sum of our duty in love of the proper kind and degree to God and man, and in immediate succession, the motive to this duty, or the source of this love, the knowledge of the glory of Christ the Saviour, David's Son, and David's Lord, as it is exhibited in the work of salvation, in the humiliation of his earthly, and the glory of his heavenly state. With these glorious and fundamental truths are set before us examples, in the scribes, of pride, selfishness, oppression and hypocrisy, to be avoided as opposite to the law of love, and in the widow, who cast her two mites into the treasury, of faith, humility, self-denial and devotedness to God, to be imitated by us if we would be the disciples of Christ. Ver. 28—34. None but he, who himself gave the law to Moses, could have thus laid his hand upon the pervading principle that animates all its requirements, and in one word unfolded the spirit of the whole to us. Mark the divine wisdom of your Saviour's words. He gives to God the place, and the kind of homage, and the degree that is due to God. Love to God is the first commandment, love with all the heart, since God is one; love which consecrates all the faculties and powers of our nature to God, and proclaims the most energetic exercise of these to be our reasonable service. Like this is the second commandment, 'love thy neighbour as thyself;' love him in God, because thou lovest God, selfishness being swallowed up, and self-love kept subordinate to the love of God. Any commandment of the first table of the law which is not obeyed from love to God, and of the second, from love to God and man, is disobeyed, whether external compliance be given or withheld. Love is the image of God, the blessed One, and pure and perfect love is pure and perfect blessedness.

The scribe who knew that love was the fulfilling of the law, and proclaimed this conviction in opposition to the popular creed, and in the presence of his prejudiced and exasperated fellow-scribes, was 'not far from the kingdom of God.' Of that kingdom which is 'righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost,' love is the character by which the citizens are distinguished from the world. Without love there is no righteousness, no peace, no joy in the Holy Ghost, for the first-fruit of the Holy Ghost (Gal. v.) is love. Love, too, is the end of our election in Christ, and of all the blessings bestowed on us in Christ, Eph. i. 3, 4. Faith in Christ worketh by love, and without faith in Christ or beyond the

measure of our faith, there is no love either to God or man. The carnal heart is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of love. Ver. 35—37. Why did Christ receive no answer to this inquiry? Because none of the scribes or people knew the glory of Christ. The answer is, Emmanuel; God with us, the Word made flesh, David's Lord born of the seed of David, according to the flesh. Behold the condescension which David's Lord manifested in becoming for us David's Son. 1 John iv. 7—11. Ver. 38—40. 'Beware of the scribes,' &c. Pride is abomination in the sight of God. A proud professor of religion must be a hypocrite. There is no love to God or man in the heart that is the seat of pride and vanity. Although the proud make many prayers, God will not hear. There is no form of pride so disgusting as spiritual pride. Ver. 41—44. All the rest gave of their abundance or superfluity, so that there was no self-denial in the sacrifice which they made; the widow had but two mites, but she gave her all to the God in whom she lived, and confided in his providence and his promise for her support. She loved much. She obeyed the first commandment.

Make the poor widow your example, in her love to God, her faith in God, her self-denial, her humility, her surrender of her all to God. Contrast her with the scribes. It is not learning, theological or secular, that makes man or woman truly great or truly happy in the sight of God. The scribes were learned; the poor widow was most probably one 'who knew, and knew no more, her bible true.' It is not exalted station or honour. The scribes had the front seats, and salutations, and all that marks dignity among men; the poor widow was the humblest in the land. It is not riches. The scribes were rich, the widow had but one farthing which she gave to God. She had not even one mite now left. It is not friends or family comforts. Her husband dead; she had no earthly comforter. Yet, with all their learning, honours, riches, and friends, the scribes were but reserved to 'greater damnation,' while without a friend, without a mite, without honour, learning, or talents, the widow was, in the sight of God, the greatest, the richest, the wisest in the land of Judea. God was her friend, God her portion, God her glory, God her all; and in God, and in the kingdom of God, she was blessed.

PRAYER.

O Lord, who would not glorify thee, who hast said to our Lord, when he ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. We rejoice to hold communion with thee through a risen Saviour, and desire to experience the power of his resurrection. By that may we realize ourselves begotten again to a living hope, and raised with Christ to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us who are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith, unto salvation. Through

union to him in his death and resurrection, may we realize ourselves as called to participation in his victory over sin and death, and him that hath the power of death, as blessed with all spiritual blessings among the inhabitants of heaven, to whom, as members of the one family in heaven and on earth, in Christ the universal Head, we are already come; and although our life is at present hid, when he, who is our life, shall be revealed in his glory, without sin unto salvation, may we also be revealed with him in glory. O may we live every day of our appointed time as those who are sealed with the earnest of the inheritance, the Spirit whom he sends forth to the day of redemption. Every day may we experience more of the mighty working of his power, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, shedding abroad the love of Christ in our hearts, and enabling us to stand, and having done all to stand, maintaining the fight of faith, and in the spirit of patience obtaining the victory. Father, put thou both the first and great commandment, and that which is like it, into our minds; write thou these, according to the promise of thy covenant, on our hearts, and let them be exemplified more and more in our lives, that we may be holy and without blame before thee in love. May the Spirit enable us to call Jesus, Lord; revealing to us the mystery of godliness, which is not revealed by flesh and blood. By the knowledge of that may we be blessed. Guard us against pride, above all against spiritual pride, against the love and the spirit of the world, against hypocrisy and self-deception; and while, like the poor widow commended by the Saviour, we give all that is ours and ourselves to thee, may we do it as those who know that they are bought with a price, saying, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. For Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI. 14.

SCRIPTURE—LEVITICUS VIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

This chapter presents a detailed account of the ritual observed, by divine appointment, on the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the office of priesthood, under the ancient Jewish economy. It may perhaps be difficult to determine what is the precise meaning of every particular ceremony that was performed, and of every successive sacrifice that was offered on that solemn occasion; but we can be

at no loss to perceive that the whole was graciously designed to serve as a shadow of good things to come, and to direct the faith of the church forward to another priest of an infinitely higher order than Aaron, who should be made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

In perusing this chapter, or any similar portion of the Old Testament scriptures, we should carefully consider, that however unlike the Mosaic economy may be to that of Christ in form, they are not different systems of religion, but merely different dispensations of the same covenant of grace. To the Jewish church was the gospel preached as well as unto us, only with a less degree of clearness and simplicity. They saw afar off, and exhibited in promise, what we behold brought nigh, and realized in performance. The same truth which is presented to our minds in words of simple meaning and literal announcement, was imparted to theirs through the medium of mystical signs and bleeding sacrifices. The Aaronical priesthood had distinct allusion to the Saviour that was to come, in its appointment and consecration; and from Christ alone did the whole system of its services derive all its significance and all its importance.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Repeatedly are we reminded in this chapter, that every circumstance pertaining to the investment of Aaron with the sacred office to which he was raised, was ordered by divine authority: this is the thing which the Lord commanded to be done. And how interesting is it to consider, that as Aaron was called of God to this honour, and did not assume it; so also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. It gives strong confirmation to our faith to be assured, that our Lord Jesus Christ was not only perfectly qualified for the work which he undertook, but divinely commissioned for the performance of it. His appointment to the office of Mediator was the thing which the Lord commanded to be done, and in the execution of all the parts of that office, he could truly affirm, 'I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.' 'Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him: for him hath God the Father sealed.'

With what confidence may we now draw nigh to God, seeing we have such an High Priest as the Lord Jesus Christ, who needeth not daily to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the people's, for this he did once when he offered up himself, and then for ever sat down on the right hand of God. Even the most eminent of those who were honoured with the office of priesthood under the law, were men who had infirmity. Aaron and his sons needed purification and pardon themselves, before they could be allowed to minister in the presence of Jehovah on behalf of others: the sacred garments were not to be put on until Moses had brought the priests to the door of the tabernacle, and washed their bodies with pure water. But Jesus possessed really, and by the constitution of his person,

that moral purity which belonged to the legal priesthood only emblematically. What they were merely in figure, he was in truth, a high-priest holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. Let us look to him in the assurance of faith as the Lord our righteousness; and relying on the prevalence of his constant intercession, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy to pardon and find grace to help in every time of need.

PRAYER.

We bow our knees this morning unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named; for unto thee, O Lord, every knee should bow, and every tongue ascribe praise. But wherewith shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the high God? Thy excellency might justly make us afraid; for thou art not a man as we are that we should answer thee, and that we should come together in judgment. We feel that it becomes us to stand in awe of thy majesty, for we are sinful dust and ashes: but we rejoice that we are warranted at the same time to confide in thy mercy; for this has been thy name and thy memorial in all generations, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious. Thou hast set forth thine own Son, to be a propitiation for our sins, and hast raised him from the dead, and exalted him to glory, to be a perpetual intercessor on our behalf. Him thou hearest always; and because he hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour, thou hast been pleased to declare thy willingness to receive graciously all who come unto thee by him. By him therefore would we now offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to God in his name. We desire to acknowledge thee as the giver of every thing that contributes to our domestic comfort and happiness. We have to praise thee for the preservation of our lives and health, and for the continued supplies of whatsoever is needful for our bodies, or may be instrumental in furthering the welfare of our souls. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with his benefits, even the God of our salvation. In looking forward to the duties of this day, we humbly plead that sufficient grace may be bestowed, to enable us to discharge them faithfully and fully. Whether we sit in the house, or walk by the way, may we be shielded by thy providence from danger, and restrained by thy grace from sin. Be thou our strong habitation, whereunto we may continually resort. May we walk in the light of thy countenance, and in thy name may we rejoice all the day. Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord; we there-

fore beseech thee to maintain the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor. Relieve the fatherless and widow; give food to the hungry, raise those that are bowed down, and heal the broken in heart. May the Lord fulfil the desires we have now so imperfectly expressed, and do for us above all that we are able to ask, for the sake of his own Son, our Saviour. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXII. 26.

SCRIPTURE—MARK XIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The divine mission of our Lord Jesus Christ is attested not only by the numerous miraculous works which he performed, but by the distinct prophetic announcements which he made from time to time, regarding the events that were to befall the Jews as a church and nation; and the success which was to accompany the efforts of his own disciples, in promulgating the gospel throughout the world. One of the most remarkable of these predictions is narrated in the chapter before us, and such is the minute correspondence between the statements here made, and the undoubted facts of Jewish history, that no one can compare them, with an unprejudiced mind, without the fullest conviction that Jesus was as wonderful in counsel as he was excellent in working, and that he was in truth a prophet, mighty in word and deed before God and all the people.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The Lord is governor among the nations, and all his ways are ways of judgment. Whatever subordinate agency may be in operation, at any time, for evil or for good to a people, the permission or appointment of that agency is invariably to be ascribed to God. A nation may be invaded by a foreign enemy, or permitted to enjoy tranquillity in all its borders; it may be torn asunder by civil dissensions, or firmly compacted as one family in the bonds of loyalty and love; it may be groaning under the exactions of rigorous and unjust laws, or rejoicing in the blessing of a mild and equitable government; it may be cursed by the exaltation of the vilest of men into its seats of authority and power, or made happy by the promotion of the wise, the virtuous, and the prudent, but in none of these changes of condition is there any thing accidental. Man may execute his part, in bringing about one or other of those alternate and opposite states, and according to the part which he takes, may be the deserving object of praise or blame; but the freest actions of man are made mysteriously to subserve the purposes of the most wise, and righteous, and holy government of God. It is God who increaseth the nations and destroyeth them. He enlargeth the nations and straiteneth them again. Sometimes he bleaseth them so that they are multiplied greatly. Again they are diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sor-

row. In all the great changes that are taking place around us, and especially in those changes that may affect our interests as a nation, whether prosperous or adverse, let us look not to second causes merely, but to him whose throne is in the heavens, and who doth according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth. The Jews furnish a most instructive exemplification of the maxim which regulates the divine government towards communities. Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people, and must, sooner or later, bring them to ruin.

PRAYER.

O Almighty God, who art high above all nations, and whose glory is above the heavens, we come together this evening to adore thy sovereignty, to make confession of our sinfulness, and to cast ourselves anew on thy mercy in Christ Jesus. From the place of thy habitation thou lookest upon all the inhabitants of the earth, and exercisest over them a wise, and righteous, and holy providence. Thou considerest all their works, that thou mayest show thyself strong on behalf of the upright in heart, and plentifully reward proud doers, by executing upon them the judgment written. When we look to Jerusalem, the place where thou didst set thy name at the first, and see what thou hast done to it for the wickedness of thy people Israel, we may well tremble for ourselves, lest we also should be cast out of thy sight, and have all our holy things laid waste. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear so is thy wrath. Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies; thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger; the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Thou hast dispensed blessings to us in greater profusion than to almost any other nation on the face of the earth. Thou hast blessed us in the city and in the field; thou hast made us plenteous in goods, and in the fruit of our cattle, and in the fruit of our ground, and hast established pure religious ordinances in the land which thou hast given us, that we should be a holy people to show forth thy praise. But, alas, are we not a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters? We have forsaken the Lord; we have provoked the holy One of Israel unto anger; we have gone away backward. How justly mightest thou pour out upon our land the full vials of thy wrath, making us a detestation and a curse, an astonishment and reproach to other nations. If thou shouldest bring an utter desolation upon our state, causing our enemies to ride over our heads, and us to bow submissively to their yoke; if thou

shouldest take away from us the judge and the prophet, the honourable man and the counsellor, the cunning artificer and the eloquent orator, and appoint children to be our princes, and babes to rule over us, so that the people should be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour; if thou shouldest make heaps of our cities, and leave our towns without inhabitants; if thou shouldest completely quench the light of thy blessed word, and give us over to the service of dumb idols, or the superstitions of popish ignorance, we should be constrained to acknowledge that thy judgments were righteous, because we have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of our fathers, and our tongue and our doings have been against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory. But, O Lord, we earnestly deprecate thy displeasure, although our iniquities do testify against us. Whilst we plead that thou wouldest not enter into judgment with us as a family, we would also seek the good of the land in which we dwell. Avert from it, we humbly beseech thee, the infliction of deserved evils; continue towards it the enjoyment of thy wonted kindness. Make us to mourn truly both for our personal sins and for all the abominations that are done in the midst of the land. May we, of this house, ever serve the Lord, and be found in all conditions cleaving to him with purpose of heart. May the knowledge and love of Christ increase in this neighbourhood, and in this nation, and be speedily extended throughout the world. May we abide this night under the shadow of thy wings, and may we awake in the morning with renewed energy of body and mind, and be still with God. We ask all in the name of Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the one living God, we desire to ascribe all glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCIX. 1.

SCRIPTURE—LEVITICUS X.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

This chapter presents an affecting but most instructive example, of the guilt incurred by profaning the solemn ordinances of God's house, and especially by presuming to draw nigh to him in any other manner, than that which he himself has prescribed. Ver. 1. 'Strange fire;' If these words are to be understood literally, they intimate, that the crime of Nadab and Abihu consisted in kindling the incense not with coals taken from the altar of burnt offering,

but from some other place, in opposition, it would seem, to the express command of God. They might conceive that fire was an element which possessed the same essential properties from whatever source it might be derived, and therefore, that it could be of no consequence whether it were taken from a common hearth, or a consecrated altar. God judged otherwise. In ver. 9. we find a command to Aaron and his sons, that they should drink neither wine nor strong drink, when they were to go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they should die there: viz. as Nadab and Abihu had just done. Ver. 12—15. Moses reminds them of their duty, lest this affair should have banished it from their thoughts. Ver. 16—18. The priest's eating the sin offering of the people, might be intended to teach that their sin was in some sort laid upon him, as Christ is said to bear our sins.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How needful is it to have the sanction of divine authority, for every thing that we observe and do in the worship of God. He hath not left the order of his house to be arranged or altered, according to the fickle humours or vain fancies of men; but hath established it by law. No outward performances, however costly in themselves, or splendid and imposing in appearance, can possibly be pleasing to God, if their origin is to be traced to human invention, and their end is to be found merely in the gratifications of human pride and vanity. 'It is a dangerous thing,' Bishop Hall remarks, 'in the worship of God to decline from his own institutions: we have to do with a Being who is wise to prescribe his own worship, just to require what he hath prescribed, and powerful to revenge what he hath not required.' In every act of worship therefore, let us propose to ourselves the question, What mean ye by this service? And let us be sure, that we be able to answer in the words of Moses; 'this is the thing which the Lord hath commanded to be done.' Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire. There is something in the thought of having immediate communication with a Being of absolute purity and perfection, and of inconceivable majesty and glory, that when realized, can hardly fail greatly to impress and solemnize the mind. In our acts of worship, it is true we behold no outward manifestations of a divine presence; no luminous cloud fills the temple where we assemble with unapproachable glory, and no awful voice from on high is ever heard to testify the acceptance of our persons, or give us an assurance that our prayers have come up in memorial before God. He, before whom we stand, may in this respect, as in others, be said to be a God who hideth himself. His presence however is real, although his essence be invisible. In the assembly of the saints therefore, great fear is due unto the Lord. 'Honour and majesty are before him, strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. O worship him therefore in the beauty of holiness; fear before him, all the earth. 'A bishop,' saith the apostle Paul, 'must be sober, of good behaviour, and not given to wine. Let ministers of the sanctuary give heed

to the injunction that was laid on Aaron and his posterity, for all time to come; that they may not offer strange fire before God, which may devour both them and the people of their charge. What a fine example of resignation under trial does Aaron here exhibit. The desire of his eyes, the children on whom his fondest hopes had rested, are taken from him by a stroke, indicative of the anger of God. But he held his peace. He felt the severity of the dispensation, but he bowed submissively to its equity. However dark it might seem, he was satisfied it must be right, for it was the doing of the Lord.

PRAYER.

O Lord God Almighty, thou art to be feared above all gods, for all the gods of the nations are idols, alike impotent to help their votaries, or to hurt their despisers; but thou hast a mighty arm, strong is thy hand and high is thy right hand; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of thy throne. A fire goeth before thee, and burneth up thine enemies round about. Thou takest pleasure in them that fear thee, and wilt fulfil their desire; but unto the wicked thou sayest, What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my name and covenant in thy mouth. We are conscious, O most holy Lord God, that we cannot stand before thee on the ground of personal righteousness. We have neither the clean hands nor the pure heart that would entitle us to a blessing from the Lord. On the contrary, our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and the transgressions of our lives have been more in number than the hairs of our heads. When therefore we stretch forth our hands thou mightest hide thine eyes, and turn a deaf ear to our supplications. Instead of granting our requests, thou mightest righteously cast us away from thy presence, or consume us in thine anger, and cause our blood to be mingled with our sacrifice. But though our sins are sufficiently numerous and heinous to deserve thy displeasure, and to provoke the manifestation of it in the execution of fearful judgments against us, yet do we feel encouraged, through the merits and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, to seek thy favour with humble confidence, and to hope in thy mercy. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared, and that forgiveness we now humbly ask in his name who died for our sins. Purge us with the blood of the Lamb, and we shall be clean; wash us, and we shall be whiter than snow. Put thy fear into our hearts, that we may not depart from thee. Make us to understand the way of thy precepts; so shall we talk of thy wondrous works. May we remember thy judgments of old, O Lord, and refrain

our feet from every evil way. Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes; hold thou us up and we shall be safe, and we will have respect to thy statutes continually. We pray for the peace and prosperity of our country; we also seek the good of thy church. God be merciful unto us, and bless us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked. Rid us and deliver us from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood. Fulfil the desire of them that fear thee; exalt the horn of thy people; let the children of Zion be joyful in their king. Be gracious to all the members of this family; with favour do thou compass us as with a shield. Cleanse each one of us from secret faults, and keep us from presumptuous sins. Let integrity and uprightness preserve us. We now wait on thee. Let the words of our mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LVII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—MARK XIV. 1—31.

REMARKS.

The evangelist here narrates some of the deeply affecting incidents that occurred in the history of our blessed Lord, immediately previous to the consummation of his sufferings on the cross. The conspiracy of the chief priests and scribes, fully justifies the observation of Solomon, when he says the counsels of the wicked are deceit. These men knew well that Jesus had done nothing worthy of death, and consequently, that it was in vain to seek any real ground of accusation against him; but rather than suffer him to live, they were resolved to sacrifice every principle of honour and conscience, as well as every dictate of religion and humanity. They consulted how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. We are ready to exclaim against the baseness of such conduct; but alas, it is baseness not peculiar to the people of the Jews. In our own day, we may observe the enemies of the cross but too closely following the steps of those priests. Candour, they are aware, would ill serve their purpose in their assaults upon the church of Christ; but they think it not impossible that they may gain their end by craft. They therefore take counsel together against the Lord, and devise deceitful matters against them that are the quiet of the land. Ver. 8—9. That no one can honour Christ, without receiving from him more abundant honour and reward, is a truth beautifully illustrated in the case of the woman, who, in testimony of reverence for his person, and

gratitude for his benefits, brake a box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head. To some of the disciples indeed it appeared doubtful, whether this transaction should be regarded as prudent or commendable; but their censures were speedily silenced by this authoritative intimation, 'she hath wrought a good work upon me.' Whatever sacrifices we may make for the sake of Christ, will be duly appreciated, even to the giving of a cup of cold water in his name. Ver. 10, 11. What a solemn caution does the conduct of Judas hold out to all professors of Christianity! He was one of the twelve. He associated with the other apostles in preaching the gospel, and doubtless spake with as much apparent earnestness of the grace and glory of his Master's kingdom as they did; he was with them in their hours of retirement, and seemed to be interested in the conversation, and edified by the prayers of Jesus, as deeply as they were; and it is probable, that in profession of veneration for his character, and attachment to his person, he was outdone by none. But his heart was not right with God, it still went after its covetousness. Though he was numbered with the disciples, and had obtained part of their ministry, he was in reality of the synagogue of Satan. Let us take heed and beware of hypocrisy, and of that covetousness which often leads to it. Ver. 12—21. What satisfactory proof do we here find of the divine nature of our Lord and Saviour. Does he not show himself to be possessed of the attribute of omniscience? Does he not manifest such a minute and accurate acquaintance with the actions and affairs of men, and even with the dispositions of the heart, as can properly belong to God only? In sending two of his disciples into the city, and foretelling the precise spot, and the particular circumstances, in which they should meet a man with whom they had previously been unacquainted; and foretelling, too, the reception he should give them, after they had stated their errand; did he not evince, not only that all things were naked and open to his view, but likewise, that all hearts were in his hand? And was not this also apparent in the accusation, which, in the presence of all the disciples, he brought against Judas? How must that apostate have been confounded when he was made to know that all his actions had been observed, and that the most secret purposes and plottings of his heart were fully understood. Ver. 22—25. If we are disciples of Jesus indeed, let us by all means keep the feast of the Lord's supper. The observance is commanded by the highest authority, and to all who engage with suitable dispositions, it never fails to be accompanied with the highest advantage. Ver. 27—31. There is no knowledge of more importance to the Christian, than the knowledge of himself, and yet there is none of more difficult attainment. If we have it in any good degree, it will make us humble, watchful, prayerful and charitable. If we be destitute of it, we shall easily be lifted up with pride, and continually be liable to fall into the snare of the devil. How little of this knowledge did Peter possess, when he boasted so confidently of his courage and fidelity, and would lean to his own understanding, rather than listen to the faithful caution of his Lord.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou knowest the hearts of the children of men; thou seest all their goings. From thy inspection there is no darkness, nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. Kings of the earth and rulers may take counsel together against the Lord, but thine hand shall find out all thine enemies; thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Gather not our soul with sinners, nor our life with bloody men, in whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes; but let integrity and uprightness preserve us, for we wait on thee. May we never withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of our hand to do it, but let us not deceive ourselves, by supposing that charity to our fellow-creatures comprehends the whole duty of man. May we be disposed at all times to honour the Lord with our substance, by employing it liberally and cheerfully, in any way that may seem truly fitted to promote the glory of thy name, or the interests of thy kingdom in the world; and however humble our services or sacrifices may be, may we derive encouragement to offer them, from considering the respect which thou hast uniformly manifested unto the lowly. We rejoice to think that we serve a Master who will receive graciously the smallest testimony of our regard for his person, and who will never forget any work or labour of love which we may show towards his name. May we never be ashamed to confess our Redeemer before men; and should the wicked speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against us for thy sake, may it be enough for our encouragement to remember thy promise, Them that honour me, I will honour. O Lord, we would be admonished by the many examples recorded in thy word, of the danger of making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. May we take heed and beware of hypocrisy, for the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment. Preserve us, O Lord, for in thee do we put our trust. Thou hast delivered our soul from death, wilt not thou deliver our feet from falling, that we may walk before God in the light of the living? We dare not affirm that we will never deny thee in any wise, but we desire, with all humility, to say that it is our fixed purpose, in the strength of thy grace, to cleave to thee and to thy service all the days of our life. Leave us not nor forsake us, O God of our salvation, but do thou preserve our going out and our coming in from this time forth, even for evermore. Thou hast put gladness in our hearts this day, by bestow-

ing upon us many personal and domestic comforts and blessings, for all of which we desire to give thanks. And now we will lay us down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest us to dwell in safety. Harken to the voice of our supplications, and send an answer in peace, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXVI. 13—19.

SCRIPTURE—LEVITICUS XVI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

To the Israelitish worshipper the ceremonial observances of the day of annual atonement were peculiarly solemn and awakening; and to us, who have, by the gospel of Christ, received a deeper insight into the nature of the principles on which they were founded, they are still full of interest and edification. One of these principles, that of substitution, entered largely into the institutions of the Mosaic law, a remarkable instance of which appears in the dedication of the males of the entire tribe of Levi to the peculiar service of God, in place of the first-born males of all the other tribes. But it was especially in their sacrifices that this principle was recognized, and on the anniversary of atonement the whole services of the day were founded upon it. The victims died as substitutes for those in whose name they were sacrificed, thus publicly declaring that the latter were sinners deserving of death. God appointed this significant rite as an act of confession and penitence, and promised to receive it when offered with suitable feelings, as the means of forgiveness and reconciliation; for, although it was utterly insufficient of itself, yet by being a type of the great atonement, it derived virtue and efficacy from this one true and all-sufficient sacrifice. Hence, the doctrine of atonement or expiation for sin was intimately associated with that of substitution. The minds of men were in this manner, under the Mosaic law, rendered familiar with the leading doctrine of the gospel, and sinners were prepared to receive the substitution and atonement of Christ as their only ground of reconciliation to an infinitely holy and just God. In this sense the law is said by an apostle to be 'a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.' But while the high priest was, especially on the day of atonement, a type of Christ, he was in every thing infinitely his inferior. This was indicated in various ways, which have been noticed in the epistle to the Hebrews. The high priest, as a sinful creature, offered up an atonement for himself, but Christ made no such atonement, for he was 'without sin.' The high priest frequently resumed his sacrifices; Christ died once for all, and thus 'by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' In like manner also, the high priest entered yearly into the holy of holies, which was a type of heaven; but Christ, once for all, 'entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.' This remarkable differ-

ence is strikingly summed up by Paul in Heb. ix. 24—26.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The doctrine of the atonement is calculated to fill the mind at once with self-abasement and with hope: with self-abasement when we think of the malignity of our sins, which could not be simply pardoned, but required to be expiated; and with hope when we find God so loving the world, that he gave his only begotten Son to death—the death of the cross, that 'whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.' And again, when we turn from the Father to the Son, sentiments still more intense and powerful arise in the mind. That the eternal Son of God should, for our salvation, humble himself to become a man—a man of sorrows!—that he should even subject himself to the wrath of the infinitely holy and just One, due to sinners; that after his ignominious death, he should carry his human nature to heaven, to present himself in that nature before the everlasting throne, as our mediator and advocate,—who can estimate the vastness of this love? What feelings of affection and thankfulness, ought it to excite in the minds of those who are the objects of it! Can a whole life, can eternity itself, spent in his service, make an adequate return?

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father! we bless thee that we who are united by many endearing earthly ties, are, through thy good providence, again permitted to worship at thy footstool. We have been preserved during the silent watches of the night, because thy sleepless eye has watched over us, and thy unwearying arm has upheld us; and we are now permitted to kneel before thee, because thou waitest to be gracious to us. We humbly confess, that we are altogether unworthy of this renewed proof of thy paternal care. But thou art the Lord God, merciful and gracious; and instead of casting us off in thy just displeasure, thou hast continued to surround us with tokens of thy favour, and to encourage us with the most gracious promises. We desire to be grateful for the temporal blessings which thou permittest us to enjoy; and to receive with submission, and even with thankfulness, the afflictive dispensations wherewith thou hast been pleased to visit us, knowing that thou doest all things well; but above all, we would adore and bless thee as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. O teach us to feel more deeply and more influentially, that there is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus; that, as we are sinners, we can only come before the throne of thy holiness through the Saviour of sinners. Enable us through thy Holy Spirit to accept of Christ as our substitute, and our sacrifice of atonement;

and to come before thee, clothed in the robe of his righteousness. We bless thee, that he who died for our sins rose again for our justification; that he is now seated at thy right hand, making continual intercession for us, and that to him thou hast committed the judgment of the last day, because he is the Son of man. We rejoice to believe that in him all fullness dwells; and that he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. While these blessed views preserve us from despair, O Lord, suffer not our weak hearts to pervert them into a cause of presumption. We beseech thee to look down in mercy on all who are now assembled before thee. Take each individual under thy divine protection. Accommodate the dispensations of thy providence and grace to our various circumstances, enlighten our darkness, change our sinful propensities, supply our wants, exalt our affections, renew us in the spirit of our minds. We commit ourselves, and all who are dear to us, to thee. Bless our friends, reward our benefactors; turn the hearts of our enemies, and, if they have sinned against us, enable us to forgive them, as we expect forgiveness from thee. Make us all fellow-workers together with thee, in promoting the eternal interests of each other, and of our fellow-sinners. Day after day, so long as thou art pleased to preserve our lives in this fleeting world, may we take counsel together while we advance through its changing scenes, led by thy unseen hand, comforted and guided by thy Holy Spirit, looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; and at last, having finished our course and kept the faith, may we meet at thy right hand, never more to be separated. Hear and accept of us for the sake of him whom thou hearest always, our Redeemer and advocate, Jesus Christ. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXV. 1—5.

SCRIPTURE—MARK XIV. 32—72.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The garden of Gethsemane has been justly regarded as the place where those peculiar and mysterious sufferings commenced, which were derived immediately from the hand of a just and holy God, who thus showed his abhorrence of sin, by punishing it in the person of his own Son, the willing substitute for sinners. Jesus was, through his whole life, a man of sorrows; but from this period, till he expired on the cross, the full vial of affliction was emptied upon his head. From the commencement of his ministry to its close, he had been subjected to

the hatred and contempt of those whom he earnestly desired to save; but now he was to be abandoned by the very disciples, who received his instructions and shared his confidence, to be condemned at once by the blinded council of his own peculiar people, and by an unprincipled heathen governor; to be buffeted, scourged, and crucified. To these indignities and tortures, however, though revealed to his prophetic view in all their terrors, he meekly looked forward. They moved not the settled purpose of his soul, nor caused his heart for a single moment to quail. The storm of human wrath might burst on him in all its fury; the insults of the people, the crown of thorns, the nails of the cross, the spear which was to pierce his side, what were they to the Redeemer of a guilty world! But O! the expiation of human guilt, when God laid on him the iniquity of us all! the dismay, the intolerable anguish of that indignation and wrath which fell upon him when he suffered the just for the unjust. God alone could inflict it; the Son of God alone could endure it. No wonder that he should exclaim, 'my soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death;' no wonder that he should fall on the ground in agony, and while the blood burst from every pore, should pray, that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away; that fearful hour of the power of darkness!

Yet, amidst all this tumult of soul, mark his resignation. 'Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt.' 'Dreadful, unspeakable, as is the anguish of my crushed and tortured soul, let me drink the cup to the very dregs, if this be necessary for finishing the work thou hast given me to do.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The blindness and perverseness of the Jews, in rejecting the Son of God, and embruing their hands in his blood, have been a theme for wonder, and a cause of humiliation in every age of the church. Well may we exclaim in astonishment, Is this the promised Messiah, to whose day this once favoured people looked forward with anxious expectation; the hope of whose appearance was their refuge in danger, and their comfort in distress? Blind and infatuated, alas, they knew not what they did. But are we better than they?

Let us learn humility and self-distrust in the defection of the disciples, and especially of Peter, after the most solemn asseverations of attachment. 'If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee.' They were, doubtless, sincere in these declarations; but they trusted too much to the depth of their affection, and the strength of their untried resolution. See what happened; when danger actually arrived, they all forsook him and fled; and when Peter, rallying his drooping courage, stealthily followed his master to the high priest's palace, the fear of detection caused him to add falsehood and perjury to cowardice. What a lesson is here for us! In the hour of our prosperity we are ready to say with the psalmist, 'my mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved;' but when temptation comes, how feeble are found to be the graces in which we trusted. In nothing does the deceitfulness of our hearts prove more conspicuous and lamentable, than

in the coldness of their attachment to him by whose holy name we are called, 'God forbid!' we say when all is at peace around us, 'God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of Christ!' But let persecution or temptation arise, and too many are offended, and walk no more with him.

What a contrast, we have seen, to all this weakness and selfish terror is exhibited in the character and conduct of Jesus. O let us never forget that he suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we are not worthy to lift up our eyes to the place where thine honour dwelleth; yet thou invitest us to present ourselves before thee, and to look up to thee as children to a father, able and ready to help. And now, O Father, we obey thy gracious invitation, trusting in that mercy and grace which are revealed to us in the gospel of thy Son. We come, casting away from us all dependence on our own righteousness, and entreating thee to regard us in the face of thine Anointed. We have no services of our own to plead; we have no rights of our own to demand. But Christ has died for sinners such as we are; and we plead the merits of his sacrifice, and the all-prevailing efficacy of his intercession. O for his sake pardon our sins, and receive us graciously, and love us freely! Our sinful hearts, O holy God, are naked and open before thee: our secret thoughts are read by thy all-seeing eye. Create in us clean hearts, renew right spirits within us. Raise our affections from earth to heaven, from the fleeting things of time to the endless glories of eternity. O bestow upon us the spirit of our divine Master; who made it as his meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father; and who, even in his darkest hour of trial, said, 'Not my will, but thine be done.' We apply, O Lord, to thee, for without thy aid we are powerless and lost. O suffer us not to fall; let thy guardian arm be around us. Save us, O Lord, else we perish. To every member of this family we earnestly pray for thy blessing. O grant that wherever we go, a Father's hand may protect us, a Father's counsel may guide us, a Father's smile may cheer us. Teach us in all things to follow where thou leadest, and to obey what thou commandest; may we be fellow-workers together with thee, in promoting the good of our fellow-creatures. In joy and sorrow, in health and sickness, in life and at death, may we lift up our souls unto thee in reverence and love; and under the guidance of thy Spirit, may we so pass through this mortal life, as to be rendered meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. With ourselves, and those

who are dear to us, we desire to remember before thee the church which thou hast planted in our land, and especially that portion of it to which we more immediately belong. O bless all the means of grace, and revive thy good work among us. May our fellow-worshippers in the same house of prayer, be united together in the bands of Christian love. May the minister whom thou hast set over us in holy things, rightly divide the word of truth. May the people receive it with faith and love, and lay it up in their hearts, and practise it in their lives. Extend the blessings of the gospel to the remotest corners of the earth; and O employ us, in our humble sphere, as instruments in thy hand for bringing Jew and Gentile, bond and free, to acknowledge Christ crucified as their only Saviour; and may we and they, united as brethren on earth, at last assemble before the throne of God and the Lamb, to mingle our praises throughout eternal ages. These humble prayers we offer up in the name of Jesus Christ, the mediator of the new covenant. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLIV.

SCRIPTURE—LEVITICUS XXIV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The lamps perpetually burning in the tabernacle, seem to typify the light of divine revelation which is necessary to enlighten the natural ignorance of the human heart. Hence the word of God is said to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, and Christ himself is declared to be the true light that lighteth every one that cometh into the world. On the several branches of the golden candlestick, mentioned in ver. 4. seven lamps were placed, (Exod. xxxvii. 17—23.) fed constantly with the purest oil; and it is, doubtless, to this that allusion is made in the book of Revelation, when the Son of God is represented as walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

The shew-bread exhibited continually on the golden table, was a public acknowledgment of God, as the bountiful bestower of the fruits of the earth, for the preservation and enjoyment of his rational creatures. As a ceremony of the Mosaic law, it seems to have referred chiefly to the covenant right which the children of Israel enjoyed to the abundant produce of the land of Canaan, as contrasted with the privations of the wilderness, where, on account of the scanty supply of natural food, they were miraculously fed with manna.

But what requires particular notice, among the things contained in this chapter, is the apprehension and punishment of a blasphemer. This man was not accounted an Israelite, although the son of an

Israelitish woman, his father being an Egyptian. He was one, doubtless, of that mixed multitude who left Egypt along with the children of Israel. Such an aggravated transgression as that of speaking contemptuously of the being and government of God, was reserved to have its punishment prescribed when it should show itself in practice, and thus exhibiting the incredible wickedness of the human heart. It is worthy of notice that this first instance of a sin so foul, in the camp of Israel, proceeded not from one of themselves, but from the scion of an idolatrous race, allied to them, indeed, but corrupted by the evil communications of an unbelieving father, and an apostate mother.

This is one of the sins for which there was the same law to the Israelite and to the stranger, because being moral it extends to the whole human race. Besides blasphemy, which is a direct insult to the Creator, those crimes are enumerated which affect the person or property of our brethren, and in such cases the law of retaliation, as it has been called, was established—beast for beast, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life. God, who has made of one blood all that dwell on the face of the earth, is the supreme governor of the Gentile as well as of the Jew, and therefore it concerned his justice to show himself, in such matters, no respecter of persons.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

It is our happiness to live not under the moonlight of the Jewish revelation, but in the noon-day glory of the Sun of righteousness. Let us who have come to the light, walk as children of the light, and let us beware, lest it should prove our condemnation that light has come into the world, and we have loved darkness rather than light, our deeds being evil. There is great reason to rejoice in the privileges of our holy faith, but it becomes us to rejoice with trembling; for if much has been given to us, much also is required at our hands. Let us never forget that our responsibility bears proportion to our privileges. 'He that despised Moses' law,' says an apostle, 'died without mercy. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?' 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' Heb. x. 28, 29, 31.

PRAYER.

In coming before thee, O Lord, on the morning of a new day, we desire to call to mind the blessings for which we are daily indebted to thy never-failing bounty. All things are full of thee. The heavens declare thy glory, and the firmament showeth thy handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens. But, beyond the bounties of thy providence, thou hast magnified thy great name in the blessings of thy grace.

We thank thee that thou hast cast our lot in a Christian land, and surrounded us with the light of the gospel; that thou hast bestowed upon us the invaluable treasure of the holy scriptures; and that, from our early years, we have been favoured with religious instructors, who have opened our minds to the truths of thy word, and have gone before us and urged us onward in the path of duty. We bless and glorify thy name above all, for the promise of thy Spirit to instruct us. We rejoice to believe, that if we seek thee with our whole hearts we shall find thee; for to none of the children of men didst thou ever say, Seek ye my face in vain. O thou whose Spirit enlightens, and whose grace enlarges the soul, we beseech thee to visit us in mercy, and to supply all our spiritual wants. We are ignorant; do thou open our souls to the knowledge of the truth. We are guilty; do thou wash away our sins in the blood of him who died to save us. We are surrounded with enemies; do thou bring us under the banner of the Captain of our salvation, that we may become more than conquerors. O suffer us not to abuse the privileges with which, as professing Christians, we are surrounded. Teach us to walk worthy of our high vocation, and to adorn the doctrine of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by lives becoming his gospel. Whether we live may we live unto the Lord, or whether we die may we die unto the Lord, that, living or dying, we may be the Lord's. We humbly but earnestly pray, O heavenly Father, that thou wouldst be pleased, in thy great mercy, to bestow these blessings on every member of this family, whether present or absent. Thou knowest infinitely better than we do what is good for them and for us; but whatever thou mayest be pleased to appoint concerning our temporal concerns, whether prosperity or adversity, whether enjoyment or suffering, whether life or death, O grant that our spiritual welfare may be advancing, and that all things may work together for our eternal interests, till we be all prepared for our great change, and for the employment and happiness of the world of spirits, in the presence of our Saviour and our God. While we thus pray for ourselves and our dear relatives, we would not be unmindful of the immortal souls of others. O Lord, grant that thy word may have free course and may be glorified among our neighbours, our countrymen, our fellow-Christians, our fellow-sinners, throughout the world, all who have souls to be saved. May the whole descendants of the first Adam become the children of the second Adam; that as in Adam all die, so in Christ all

may be made alive, and that the predicted period may at last arrive when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. And all that we ask is in the name, and for the sake, of thy beloved Son, our Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLIV.

SCRIPTURE—MARK XV. 1—23.

REMARKS.

It is impossible to conceive anything more extraordinary or more interesting than the events detailed, with such amazing simplicity, in this chapter. It had been predicted of Jesus that he would be at once a suffering and a triumphant Saviour, 'despised and rejected of men,' yet a king 'mighty to save,' who should 'feed his flock like a shepherd, gathering the lambs with his arms, carrying them in his bosom, and gently leading those that were with young.' Throughout the whole of his life he fulfilled these apparent contradictions. In outward circumstances he had 'no form nor comeliness,' and to the worldly eye there was 'no beauty in him that we should desire him.' Yet there dwelt in him an ineffable grace and dignity, and those who could penetrate beyond the surface 'beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth.' We now see this 'man of sorrows' in the last trying hours of his sufferings on earth. The affecting scene of the paschal supper was over when he gave to his disciples a memorial of his dying love. He had passed triumphantly through the temptation and agony of the garden. He had meekly stood before the council of his own deluded countrymen, who were thirsting for his blood. He is now arraigned as a criminal before the tribunal of a profligate heathen governor; he is condemned; he is crucified; he dies and is buried. Jesus, the Son of God, has finished a life of sorrow by a death of ignominy. The powers of darkness seem to triumph, and the malice of his enemies to be crowned with success. No miracle has blasted the arm of his murderers; no legions of angels have come to his rescue. The sun, indeed, was darkened; the earth shook; the vail of the temple was rent; but God did not come down in wrath to wither the rebels with a glance of his eye, and to assert the majesty of his government, and the divinity of his crucified Son.

Yet the whole scene displayed the ineffable dignity and beauty of the sufferer's character. 'He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so opened he not his mouth.' While his enemies were 'breathing out threatenings and slaughter' against him, his heart was melting with pity; while his murderers nailed him to the cross, he prayed, 'Father, forgive them.' With what tender affection did he, in the midst of his torture, address his mother and his beloved disciple! With what godlike grace did he accept the prayer of the

penitent thief! With what heavenly composure did he commend his spirit into the hands of his Father, while he bowed his head and gave up the ghost! Yet all the while he was enduring more than mortal agony. It was not the bodily torture which he endured; it was not the crown of thorns, the nails, and the spear which constituted that agony. There was more bitter gall in the cup of his sufferings than could be infused by a mortal hand. His appalling exclamation of horror, under a sense of desertion, when the sun withdrew his light, and all nature was convulsed, showed that the mysterious tortures of Gethsemane were still rending his inmost soul. During these awful hours he 'bore our sins in his own body,' for God had 'laid on him the iniquity of us all.' He was then voluntarily bending, in our place, under the rod of the Eternal; offering his soul a sacrifice for sin, and taking on himself the curse of a broken covenant. 'He who knew no sin, became a sin offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Well did the voice of nature unite with that of revelation, when the heathen centurion exclaimed, 'Truly this was the Son of God.' He hath overcome death, and him that had the power over it. To the believer, death is no longer an enemy, but a friend to introduce them to all the joys of everlasting life, in the presence of their Saviour and their God. 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'

PRAYER.

Again, O Lord our God, we come before thee with the voice of prayer and thanksgiving. Thou hast, in thy merciful providence, preserved us to the end of another week, and we receive it as a token for good that thou permittest us, notwithstanding the increasing load of our transgressions, once more to appear at thy footstool, to crave a Father's blessing. What are we, or what is our fathers' house that thou shouldest thus deign to bear with us. When we look back on the week which is just coming to a close, we are humbled under the remembrance of many opportunities neglected, of many duties unperformed, of many sins committed. Lord, be merciful to us, sinners! If we have done any thing to thy glory during the course of it, we humbly own that it is to thee we are indebted both for the means and the inclination; and we desire to rejoice that thou hast made us humble instruments in thy hands. Give us grace, we beseech thee, to avoid what has been evil in our past conduct, and to persevere in whatever has tended to promote thy holy will, in doing good to our brethren, or advancing the welfare of our own souls. May the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus, who suffered, leaving us an example, that we might follow his steps: And O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, enable us to take a deeper view of our Saviour's sufferings, and to behold him with the eye of

faith, wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, bearing the punishment due to our sins, and rendering thee just, while thou art the justifier of the ungodly. May we regard his death as to us the savour of eternal life, and rejoice in the blessed assurance, that thou who hast not spared thine own Son, but hast delivered him up for us all, wilt with him, also freely give us all things. O fill our hearts with thankfulness, when we remember that he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and endured the full extent of the atoning agony, till he could say, 'It is finished.' Give us, we beseech thee, an interest in these blessed words, and enable us to know and to feel, that our salvation is accomplished; and that he, who died for our sins, is risen again for our justification, and ever liveth to make intercession for us. O may the souls of those who now address thee, united thus as they are in Christian hope, be also united in Christian love! May we regard each other, not as the perishing creatures of a day, bound together by perishing ties, but as members of Christ's spiritual body; and thus members one of another. May we bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. And do thou shed abroad thy Spirit in our hearts, that we may go on our way rejoicing; and that others, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father in heaven. We pray for all men. O may they be brought from darkness unto light, and from the power of satan unto God. May we, making use of the means which thou hast put in our power, become instruments in thy hand for the advancement and extension of Christ's kingdom. Bless those devoted servants of the cross who have left the comforts of their native land, to preach the gospel to the heathen. O may their labours in the cause of the Redeemer be attended with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, till the strong delusions of the prince of darkness be dissipated, and the whole earth be enlightened by the glory of the Sun of righteousness. May our supplications and thanksgivings ascend in memorial before thee, and bring down an answer of peace, through the mediation of him who liveth and was dead, and who now appears at thy right hand, making intercession for his people. Amen.

ELEVENTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XXXIV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

By the title of this psalm, it appears to have been composed in reference to that trying period of David's life, when fear of the jealousy and rage of Saul obliged him to flee in haste from the royal household, and to leave behind him those to whom he was bound by the tenderest attachment, Michal his wife, and Jonathan who loved him as his own soul. After suffering great fatigues and hunger in his flight, he at length entered the land of the Philistines, and took refuge in the city of Gath. His fame as a warrior had preceded him. The servants of Achish the king, said one to another, Is not this David, of whom they did sing in the dance, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands? Perhaps, they also remembered his having slain their great giant Goliath. This overwhelmed him with such a consternation, lest he should be taken and be subjected to ignominious and cruel treatment, that he was suddenly seized with a falling-sickness; for such seems to be the right meaning of the words, 'he changed his behaviour.' (See Stackhouse's History of the Bible, pp. 463, 464.) Hence, Achish judging rightly, that no danger need be apprehended under such a malady, commanded him to be removed from his presence. Strongly confirmatory of this opinion, are the words in ver. 19, 20; 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all my bones, not one of them is broken.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

If in our hearts the love of God truly dwells, a careful observance of the ways of divine providence, will greatly confirm and strengthen our confidence in him, as our righteous and merciful Father. When David reflected upon his deliverance from dangers in Gath, he made the pious and holy vow of blessing the Lord at all times. Every true Christian not only praises God for deliverance from trouble, but is thankful for affliction. 'It is good for me that I was afflicted; before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have learned thy statutes.' Hence he resolves that his soul shall make her boast in God. Similar were the convictions of the apostle Paul, when he said, 'we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.' If we have a deep sense of God's loving-kindness abiding in our souls, not only will we sing aloud the praises of our God, but we will also earnestly invite others to join with us in magnifying the name of the Lord Jehovah. For incitement thereto, let us observe how remarkably the Lord, in answer to the prayers of his people, interposes for their protection. He bringeth down the mighty from their seats of lofty pride, and raiseth up the bowed-down, he saveth the poor out of their troubles, supplieth the wants of the most in-

digent and helpless, while they that are strong and violent as young lions, are often afflicted with poverty, hunger, and nakedness; and wander the wide world throughout without a friend, hated of God, and despised by men! How different this, from the condition of them that seek the Lord! Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. Come, countrymen, neighbours, friends, and come, O mine own soul, and learn the great and interesting lesson, how to live long and see much good. Who teach it so well as the man after God's own heart, especially when moved thereto by the Holy Ghost! Let then truth and honesty be found on thy lips, let thy footsteps be far from the paths of the wicked, and let there be no iniquity in our hands, but let us be continually doing good, doing all in the name, and to the glory of God, and the good of his creatures, under the consciousness that the eyes of the Lord are upon us. What though, in seeking after the righteousness of the Lord, we should be involved in many tribulations? Doth not the Lord deliver the righteous as he seeth meet, out of all their troubles? Doth he not bind up the wounds of the broken hearted, and save them who are of a contrite spirit? But against the enemies of the righteousness of God, is denounced desolation; shame and ruin are in their ways, they shall be left to weep and howl for vexation of spirit; they lie under the divine wrath, and shall inherit the blackness of darkness and despair for ever and ever. Rejoice then ye righteous in Christ, the rock of your salvation, who hath redeemed your souls, and in triumph shout, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' Thanks be unto God, who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

PRAYER.

Thou, O God, art infinitely great and glorious! Heaven is thy throne, the earth is thy footstool. Temples made with hands, cannot contain thee. Thy presence fills immensity. All creatures are naked and open to thy sight, and thou upholdest and governest them every one. The gods whom blinded nations fear, know not their worshippers, nor regard their cry; but thou, O Lord, art a God nigh unto thy people in all that they call upon thee for. The sparrow falleth not to the ground without thy will, nor are the smallest things thou hast made, below thy regard. Thou numberest even the hairs of our heads. However weak or oppressed thy people be, thou sufferest them not altogether to faint and to fail; but upholdest them in their goings. Thou, Lord, freest us from the hands of bloody and deceitful men, and deliverest our life as a bird from the snare of the fowler. What shall we render to thee, for all thy mercies? Open our mouths, that our lips may speak thy praise. Put thy Spirit within us, and we will bless thee at all times. Put thy Spirit within us, that we may discern in all the events of life the operations of thy wisdom and power. O how often hast thou

saved us out of our distresses when we had no earthly helper, and turned our mourning into joy; and for sackcloth hast girded us with gladness. Truly thy loving-kindness hath been wonderful! May the remembrance of thy favour, and the knowledge of our own unworthiness, lead us to repentance, to a deep and heart-felt abhorrence of the innumerable transgressions of thy holy and just commandments, wherewith thy word and our consciences accuse us. Alas! we have sinned both openly and secretly, we have sinned often against light, and often in ignorance, and often in violation of our most solemn vows. Work in us, O God, sorrow for sin after a godly sort. Give us grace, enabling us to depart from all iniquity; especially from all those sins which have heretofore so easily beset us, and from those to which we may be most frequently exposed. Suffer us not to forget, that, by continuing in sin, we are treasuring up unto ourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of thy righteous judgment, in which thine adversaries shall be consumed. Convince us, O Lord, thou quickening Spirit, that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when his wrath is kindled, even but a little. Turn us, O God, and we shall be turned; and let iniquity no longer have dominion over us. Wash us in the fountain opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness, through the redemption that is in Jesus; we pray to be delivered from the guilt, power, pollution, and punishment of sin. By the Holy Spirit that quickeneth, may we be transformed into the likeness of the divine image, and be made alive unto righteousness and true holiness; so that the lives we henceforth lead in the flesh, may be to the praise and glory of God; and thus have the evidence that we are the heirs of a blissful immortality. Now unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be glory, as it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be evermore. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 16.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XXXV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In composing this psalm, it is thought by some that David describes his sufferings under the persecution of Saul. If so, it probably has reference chiefly to the commencement of that harassing time when Saul concealed his enmity under the mask of pretended friendship, and affected to take pleasure in his company, whilst, however, his secret malig-

nity occasionally burst forth in fits of dangerous violence. Others think, with great probability, that David designed, in this psalm, to represent the contests which Jesus Christ had with the powers of darkness before he triumphed over them on the cross, and that David's allusions to his own dangers and hairbreadth escapes, served only as an excitement by which he became qualified to depict more graphically Christ's great patience and meekness, and the desperate malice of his foes.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

It is implied in the petition, 'Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive against me,' that the petitioner had such a cause that he could venture to make it known before God without disguise, and that so conscious was he of its justice and his own integrity, that he could ask God to take his part therein and maintain his right. We need not expect to enjoy uninterrupted peace in this world; yea, woe is unto us if all men speak well of us. Was not Christ reviled and reproached of men? Or is the servant better than his master? Have not patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and righteous men in every age, had their trials of cruel mockings and scourgings? But whilst we need not expect freedom from contention, or from envy, reproach, and injury, (for enmity ever has, and ever will subsist between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent,) let us take the utmost care that we suffer not as busy-bodies or evil doers. May it only be in such causes as we can make known to God, and in which we may reverentially ask him to plead in our behalf. David in his afflictions, Christ in his passion, the church under persecution, and the Christian in the hour of temptation, all supplicate the Almighty to appear in their behalf, and to vindicate their cause? Why should a man, conscious of his uprightness in a righteous cause, hesitate to lay it before a righteous God? In David's prayer, of which we speak, are included, first, a desire that God would appear on his side, by defeating, disabling, and dishonouring his enemies; after the same manner we may pray concerning them that persecute us for righteousness' sake. Second, a desire that God would make known to him his purpose of saving him from his adversaries, and so uphold and comfort him amid all his outward trouble.

Nothing will ever so effectually console us in our tribulation as having the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Supposing Christ to be represented in this psalm, (as some think,) as interceding against the unbelieving and blaspheming Jews, then what a striking answer do we here behold in the present dispersed and despised condition of that people. 'Let them be as chaff before the wind.' Who does not rejoice that, through their fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles? O may the receiving of them again come soon, and be as life from the dead.

Ver. 11—16. These verses exhibit the character and conduct of David in contrast with the behaviour of his enemies. How true, both in respect of David and of Jesus the Son of David, is this saying, 'False witnesses rose up against me?' Some irreligious and ungodly men are much offended at David for the

prayers against his enemies contained in this psalm. But let these persons look at David's conduct for a commentary, both upon his principles and his feelings, and compare them with the actings of his adversaries. Could it be unrighteous in David to pray that their glorying in wickedness, their impious rejoicing at the afflictions of the righteous, should be stopped? Whether the case represented in this psalm, be that of Jesus or of David, we know that God, in his righteous providence, did render unto the enemies of both according to the petitions contained in this psalm. Could it be wrong for the psalmist to pray for what it now appears to have been befitting a righteous God to do? And be it observed, he asked the Lord to do judgment, not according to his own views and feelings, but 'according to thy righteousness, O Lord my God.' May the meek inherit the earth, and may the righteousness of the righteous shine forth as brightness!

PRAYER.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, who art the creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible; thou didst make all very good. How admirable even still, notwithstanding all the disastrous effects of sin, is the order and harmony displayed throughout all thy visible works, amid all their amazing varieties whereby they contribute to promote the universal good, and to enlarge and enhance the delight and happiness of man! But alas! O God of love, we have to lament, with deepest sorrow, that our hearts have become altogether corrupt. They are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Instead of affectionate kindness, which should bind the heart of man to man, ruling and governing all the relationships of life, and making all men everywhere benefactors of each other, there have sprung up emulations, wraths, strifes, seditions, heresies, envyings, and murders, amongst the wicked themselves; yea, and the wicked rise against them also, O Lord, who walk in thy fear; they gnash against them with their teeth, devise against them dark devices, and be hardly restrained from persecuting them cruelly unto the death. Suffer them not to prevail, but break in pieces the rod of their power, and cause thy redeemed people to dwell in safety. Continue to bless us, O Lord, with the inestimable privileges which have so long been our inheritance in this our fatherland, even freedom to worship thee in spirit and truth, under our own vine and our own fig tree, none daring to make us afraid. Turn away and restrain the beginning of our enemies' wrath, and let it not come nigh our dwelling. Give unto all our enemies repentance and remission of sins, and by thy Spirit lead them into the love and obedience of the truth. Hasten the time when all shall become the willing and faithful servants of the

Lord Jesus, and when, by having been renewed by the Holy Ghost in the spirit of their minds, they shall no longer fulfil the lusts of the flesh, but shall in heart and life show forth the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Suffer us not, under any provocation, to take vengeance upon them that hate or injure us, but enable us to commit our cause to him who judgeth in righteousness. Make us willing to love our enemies and to render them good for evil, remembering that Jesus loved us when we were enemies to thee, to him, and to all righteousness, and gave himself up unto the ignominious death of the cross, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. May that mind which was in him when he suffered for us in the flesh, be also in us, that henceforth we may manifest obedience in all things to thy holy will, and be enabled, with the heart and lips, to ascribe to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all praise, honour, and glory, both now and for ever. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM xcvi. 9.

SCRIPTURE—NUMBERS xii.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

'Leprosy' is a loathsome disease, which destroys the skin, and covers the whole body with scales. It is perhaps the most infectious and awful disease incident to the human frame; and with it, as a punishment, did God afflict Miriam. 'In a vision,' God sometimes made known his will to his prophets, by a divine operation on their minds, wherein they beheld representations of events as clear and vivid as if they had beheld them transacted before the bodily senses. (Gen. xv. 1; Dan. viii. 1—15.) 'In a dream,' God at other times not only caused his prophets to see representations with a mental eye in the glass of fancy, but also to hear, as it were with a mental ear, the declarations of his will. The revelation sometimes began with a vision, which, overpowering the external senses, brought on sleep with a prophetic dream. Gen. xv. 'Mouth to mouth,' or as in Ex. xxxiii. 11. 'face to face,' denotes not only the directness, the transcendent clearness, and certainty of the intellectual light; but also the amicable manner in which it was communicated. To Moses alone was reserved the exalted privilege of holding direct converse with God.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

In the narrative contained in this chapter, we see pride, ambition, and jealousy, breaking forth in persons exalted to high station and office, in the congregation of the Lord. These vicious feelings seem

to have been excited against Moses, because God had conferred on him supreme rank and power over his people. But Miriam and Aaron were ashamed honestly to avow the real causes of their hostility to their brother; but hypocritically pretended to be offended with his having married a wife not of Abraham's lineage. The plausible pretences whereby we cloak and dissemble our sins, however successfully they may serve for a little to deceive men, hide them not from God. Neither are they generally long hid from men. The Lord descended and stood in visible glory at the door of the tabernacle, and, proclaiming in presence of the congregation his pre-eminent favour for Moses, demands of Aaron and Miriam, 'Wherefore then, were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses, who is faithful in all my house?' How meek was Moses amid all their reproaches. Let us follow his example, and not be easily provoked. The proud and vain glorious are always desirous of obtaining credit for doing great and good things, from pure and lofty principle. To them it is a grievous and sore punishment to be found out and exposed in their true character, prosecuting a malicious and criminal ambition from envious and selfish motives. Let all who are sacrificing the dearest interests, whether of their kindred, or of the community, at a shrine they are ashamed of, learn, in the public detection and punishment of Miriam, the certain exposure of their iniquities in righteous retribution. Such are the effects of striving to be the greatest. From God's severity towards Miriam, let us learn how heinous, in his sight, is the sin of unjustly reproaching and vilifying those who bear lawful authority over us, in things civil, and more especially in things sacred. The despisers of government, the presumptuous and self-willed, who are not afraid to speak evil of dignities, (2 Pet. ii. 10.) may learn, in the case of Miriam, what calamities they bring upon the commonwealth. They provoke the Lord to wrath: he forsakes the nation, withdraws the public and national tokens of his favour; and arrests the progress of national advancement.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, maker of heaven and earth, preserver and governor of the universe, we adore thee as infinite in all thy glorious perfections. All thy works praise thee, and proclaim the greatness of thy majesty. Thy gracious providence towards all men, manifests thy benevolence and thy goodness. Thou sendest rain and fruitful seasons to the just and the unjust, to the righteous and to the wicked. By thy providence thou art calling unto all men to behold and know thee, the author of every good and perfect gift. O God, who can tell all thy loving kindnesses? Who can count all the merciful deliverances thou hast wrought for thy people? Thou freest them from the hand of the oppressor. Thou gavest food when they passed through a desert land, and didst cause the water to spring from the flinty rock to quench their thirst. And withal, O Lord, in thy favour, thou

didst appoint a ruler according to thine own heart, who was faithful in all thy house. Raise up such rulers throughout Christendom, as shall prove to be nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to thy church. Especially so dispose the heart of our rulers, that they may so frame and administer laws in this great empire, that the churches thou hast planted in it, and hast watered from age to age, may have all due support and protection. Lengthen the cords and strengthen the stakes of thy tabernacle. How glorious is the city of our God, standing upon the mountain of his holiness! How beautiful for situation is mount Zion, the joy of the whole earth! Dwell, O God, for ever in the midst of her, that she may never be removed. Within her may unrighteousness never be found; but be always a refuge in the time of trouble, and be watered abundantly with the healing stream of the waters of life. And whilst thou disposest our rulers to build up Zion, and to restore her waste places, dispose us, and all the people, to give honour to whom it is due; to be subject, for conscience' sake, and to lead, under them, quiet and peaceable lives, in all honesty and godly sincerity. Let not the spirit of pride, envy, and of ambition, excite any to sedition or rebellion against lawful authority. Especially, keep all them that make a profession of believing the gospel and teaching it to others, from being the movers or approvers of sedition; whereby, whether designedly or undesignedly, they hinder the advancement of thy Son's kingdom, even as Miriam did the journeying forward of the congregation of Israel. Alas! O God, that there should have been such strifes and divisions among professing Christians; that there should be so much blindness to the unity of spirit in the church, the body of Christ. We confess this our sin, and acknowledge it is the fruit of a corrupt and carnal heart, in which there is so much pride and rebellion against thee, and out of which proceed so many evil thoughts and unclean desires. In righteousness dost thou punish us for our iniquities. In mercifulness dost thou afflict us. We bless thee, that thou dost chastise us, and awakenest us to a sense of thy fatherly love and gracious care. May we, through tribulations, learn humility, and to put confidence no longer in the flesh. Remove far from us that presumptuous pride which leads us to trust in our own righteousness. Give us grace, that we may receive the Lord Jesus Christ, as all our salvation, and all our desire. Seal us now with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption, that henceforth we may ascribe all praise and glory,

to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, now and evermore. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXIX. 15.

SCRIPTURE—MARK XV. 24—47.

REMARKS.

The violent clamour of the infatuated multitude without, making the streets re-echo their savage yell, 'Crucify him, crucify him,' have at length determined the purpose of the wavering judge. With the conviction of the perfect innocence of Jesus, and with a strong desire to set him at liberty, yet, Pilate, to please the people in their malignant rabble cry, condemned the holy Jesus to the most cruel and ignominious death the vilest criminals could die. In their casting lots for his raiment, did the twenty-second psalm, ver. 18. receive its fulfilment, for nowhere is it said that David's garments were parted, or that his hands and feet were pierced. This title 'The King of the Jews,' refers to the accusation which the Jews successfully pressed upon Pilate, after he had endeavoured to release Jesus, 'If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend.' Dreading the charge of being unfaithful to his imperial master, and with consenting to the liberation of one claiming to be king of the Jews, Pilate then sat down on the judgment-seat to pronounce condemnation, and tauntingly inquired at the Jews, 'Shall I crucify your King?' When the Jews afterwards found that Pilate adopted this title for the superscription, they murmured much at it, and the chief priests begged Pilate not to write, 'The King of the Jews;' the stern Roman refused to alter it, and thus, though by the title, he meant only to express scorn and contempt, yet in reality this deputy of the greatest emperor in the world, proclaimed Christ King at his crucifixion. Two thieves were crucified with Jesus, whereby that scripture in Isaiah liii. 'he was numbered with transgressors,' was fulfilled. The thieves also reviled him, and said, 'Save thyself and us.' Either both did so at first, and one repented quickly of his impiety, or else the plural is put for the singular, as is not unfrequently done in scripture. However that may be, one received faith in an eminent degree, and after confessing his own fault, and rebuking his companion for his impious railing, he offered to Jesus, in presence of all the mockers, the fervent prayer of saving faith, 'Lord Jesus, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.' Amazing sovereignty and riches of divine grace! The guilty criminal on the brink of eternity confesses his own sin, owns his Lord, vindicates his innocence, and puts his confidence in him as his Saviour, though he saw him dying in the midst of cruel derision. How compassionate, encouraging, and gracious was the reply, 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise!'

Three painful hours have now passed since Christ was nailed to the cross, and the sixth hour, or noon,

being come, a great and horrible darkness overspread the land of Judea, until the ninth hour, or three in the afternoon: and at that awful hour, Jesus, in the unutterable anguish of his soul, cried with a loud voice, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' But O! at the pathetic, heart-melting cry, the murderers of the Prince of life renew their barbarous and brutal revilings. But the time of suffering is near its end. Satan, death, and hell, are receiving their deadly blow. Once more, Jesus, with a loud voice, as with the strong voice of a mighty conqueror, said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; my life no man taketh from me, I lay it down in obedience to thy will; he bowed his head and dismissed his spirit! Where are the disciples at this sad parting moment, those disciples whom Jesus loved, and called to be witnesses of all he should teach and do. The holy and sympathizing women are looking on afar off; but the chosen witnesses, whither are they fled? Since death sealed the lips of the malefactor, who, with his dying breath, confessed the Son of God, do none else bear witness for him? Shall none of living men again cry, Jesus, son of David? God the Father is himself the first to bear witness, by miracles, to this Son of his eternal love. But is there yet no voice of the living men witnesses of his suffering, to hail Jesus Son of the Highest? Yes, these signs and wonders have wrought conviction in the Roman soldiers who guarded the crucifixion. They mock no more; but, with their commander the centurion, say, 'Truly this man was the Son of God.' Now also the pious counsellor, Joseph of Arimathea, who waited for the kingdom of God, and was a disciple, yet only in secret, through fear of the Jews, casts away fear, and, with courageous boldness, demands the crucified body; and along with Nicodemus, another fearful, but believing ruler of the Jews, entombs it with costly and honourable burial. May our devotions this evening, incline us to look on him who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.

PRAYER.

Our Father, who art in heaven, and yet art nigh unto all thy people on earth, providing for them food and raiment, which things fill us with many anxious cares, shut out from our thoughts all worldly cares, and enable us, with great fear and reverence, to draw near and behold the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. Well may we wonder how it is, that he, who dwelt from eternity in the bosom of the Father's love, amid all the splendours of heavenly glory, should come down to earth, and be found in fashion as a man! Is not this earth filled with thy enemies? Is there not in every man a sinful heart, full of all proud and rebellious thoughts against thee; is it not moving and employing all the members of our bodies, as instruments of unrighteousness and sin? Thy goodness is openly abused, thy laws are despised, thy holy name is blasphemed every day; and doth not thine eyes

see, that among all the children of men, there are none righteous, none that seek after God? What incomprehensible impulse moved thine only begotten Son, O Father, to take upon him a nature so vile, rebellious, and corruptible, as thou seest it in us, and by which thou art so grievously dishonoured? O the height and depth of the divine love, that formed the plan of redeeming man! O the amazing love of Jesus to poor sinners, that made him, the Son of God, become the Son of man, and come into this world, not in outward pomp and royal state, but in the poor estate of a servant, that he might share in our miseries, and give us a share in his blessedness, that through his poverty we might be made rich! How wondrous to behold him, who erewhile was in the brightness of his Father's glory, and still remaining an all-sufficient God, exposed to weariness, hunger, thirst, poverty, contempt, revilings, scourgings, and persecution,—to see him who shall hereafter judge the world before God and his holy angels, accused, tried, condemned and crucified; the Lord of life dying on the accursed tree! Thy love, O Jesus, led thee to spend tears, groans, and blood, to save us from sin and hell, and raise us to heaven. We pray not for riches and honours in this world, but we pray that nothing may ever separate us from thy love. Let us no more sin wilfully, seeing we have received the knowledge of the truth. Let not sin reign in our mortal bodies. Let not the fear of man, nor the desire of pleasing man, lead us ever to speak lightly or untruly of thy person, character or work; let us never fall into the snare of thy great enemy, Antichrist, who now sitteth in the temple of God, working with all deceiveableness of unrighteousness; but counting the past time of our lives more than sufficient to have wrought the will of the flesh, may we pass the remainder of our sojourning here in godly fear. Let neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor peril, nor sword, nor life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, ever separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rooted and grounded in this love, may we be built up, an holy temple, for an habitation of God through the Spirit; and at last, be presented faultless and blameless, at our Lord's coming, with exceeding joy; and to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be glory now and for ever. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 12.

SCRIPTURE—NUMBERS XIII.

REMARKS.

The searching of Canaan was apparently a reasonable measure; it pleased Moses well, and was permitted by God, who even instructed Moses regarding the manner in which it should be conducted; for, there was no evil in the thing itself; but, to the Israelites, it was a sin, and a snare. It was the suggestion of unbelief, and led to the most disastrous consequences. God was not the author of sin in giving them what they wished. On the contrary, his conduct towards them on this occasion rendered their unbelief just the more unreasonable and inexcusable, and the wickedness of their hearts more manifest; and it more fully displayed and vindicated the righteousness of God, in the awful curse which he denounced, and executed against them. For observe, they got spies as they wished. The Israelites had also the testimony of sense, when with their own eyes they saw the extraordinary fruit of the promised land which the spies had brought with them on their return. But the spies, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, were destitute of a right spirit and of good courage. The testimony which they gave on their return, abundantly confirmed all that God had declared regarding the goodness of the land. But the unbelief of the other spies found opportunity to exert its influence, and the example of timidity and distrust which they exhibited had a contagious and most fatal effect upon the Israelites. When the truth of God regarding the goodness of the land was confirmed by the testimony of the spies, and the appearance of its fruits, the inveterate unbelief of the Israelites was directed against another of the attributes of God, and questioned his power to fulfil his promise in the face of such formidable opposition as the sons of Anak might offer.

How insidious the sin of unbelief! Its suggestions may appear reasonable, and be of advantage; they may be well pleasing to true believers, and be permitted even by God. How hard to discover the workings of unbelief in ourselves, or in others! But the evil, the sin of unbelief, consists not in the outward act or conduct, but in the state of the heart towards God. Let us, therefore, look to the principles and affections of our hearts, the hidden springs of action, as well as to our outward conduct. Let us study to have pure motives, as well as praiseworthy actions; and so shall we always have a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men. How inveterate the sin of unbelief! It will resist all evidence, the most varied and multiplied, whether of sense or of testimony; whether afforded by God or by man; whether by ordinary means, or by the most stupendous miracles. How dishonouring to God is this sin! Which of the glorious perfections of Jehovah has it not insulted? His wisdom, and power, his holiness, justice, and wrath, his goodness, mercy, and love, his truth, and faithfulness, each and all of them, even to the denial of God himself, have been disregarded, distrusted, and dis-

honoured by the unbelieving heart in the inveteracy of its enmity against God. No wonder then that unbelief is so exceedingly provoking to God. Let us guard also against its contagious influence. The unbelief of the spies increased and confirmed, if it did not excite, the unbelief of the Israelites. Let us beware of those who may be under the influence of unbelief. The more conspicuous and influential their character or station, so much the more dangerous is their example. With what fervour ought we ever to pray for complete deliverance from the God-dishonouring and soul-destroying sin of unbelief.

PRAYER.

Almighty, eternal, and most glorious Jehovah, we would bow down before thee and worship, for thou art God, and besides thee there is none else. We would kneel before thee, for thou art our Maker; fearfully and wonderfully hast thou made us, and hitherto hast thou preserved us. Every day would we praise thee, and show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning; for we laid us down and slept; we awaked, for the Lord sustained us.

But wherewith shall we come before the Lord; how shall we appear in the presence of the High and Holy One. Thou, O God, art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity; thou searchest all hearts, and judgest all men. But we are all as an unclean thing, and our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. We acknowledge our transgressions; against thee, thee only, have we sinned. Our sins are more than we can number. But thou art also a God of infinite mercy, a just God and a Saviour. Thy name and thy memorial to all generations is, The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, though thou wilt by no means clear the guilty. We would bless and praise thee, O God, that thou hast made known to us the way of salvation. We bless thee, that in the fulness of time, thou didst send forth thy Son to be the propitiation for sin, that, through faith in his blood, we might obtain eternal redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of thy grace. May he be made of thee unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption. May we look to him as our example, and follow him as our guide, and cleave to him as our never-failing friend. Out of his fulness may we receive daily an abundant supply of grace suited to our various circumstances and necessities. May he direct us in duty, and succour us in temptation, and comfort us in affliction. May his strength be perfected in our weakness, and his grace be sufficient for us in every time of need.

Father of mercies, and God of all comfort,

who appointest our lot, and the bounds of our habitation, bless us in the various relations of life, and in the stations in which thy providence has placed us; and by thy grace may we be enabled suitably to discharge the duties of each. Prosper us in our lawful calling. Preserve us from engaging in any thing that may be displeasing to thee. Make us grateful to thee for all the gifts of thy providence. Make us contented with our lot; and grant us thy blessing with what thou art pleased to bestow. May we be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, may we make our requests known unto thee our God. May our conversation be in heaven. O may Christ dwell in us, the hope of glory; and even now as we go up through the wilderness of this world, this dry and barren land, may he by his word and Spirit dwelling richly in us, give us a foretaste of the blessed fruits of the heavenly Canaan. And as we draw nearer to the end of our earthly pilgrimage, may we be growing in meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, and in due time enter into the rest that remaineth to the people of God.

And now, O hearer of prayer, graciously listen to the voice of our supplications, and send us an answer in peace, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XVI. 8.

SCRIPTURE—MARK XVI.

REMARKS.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the most important miracle of the New Testament. On this fact the whole system of Christianity rests. 'For,' as the apostle argues, 'if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.' That Christ rose from the dead was established in the most satisfactory manner possible; for he showed himself alive after his death by many infallible proofs, during forty days which elapsed between his resurrection and ascension. He showed himself to such as could not possibly be deceived regarding his person, or regarding the fact of his having been previously dead as well as buried. He showed himself not to one, but to many; not once, but on various occasions, and in various places, by night and by day, unexpectedly, and by express appointment. Several of these appearances are mentioned in this chapter. See remarks on Matth. xxviii.

The unbelief of the disciples is very remarkable. They seem to have forgotten the repeated intimations which Christ gave them of his death and resur-

rection. We find none of them anxiously waiting at the grave on the morning of the third day to ascertain the truth of Christ's prediction. Even the pious women sought a dead Christ, though they found a living Lord. And when the fact of his resurrection was again and again announced to them, they did not believe it. So that when Christ showed himself to the eleven, he upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not credit the testimony of those who had seen him alive. From this we may learn, that all who do not credit the testimony of the apostles of Christ, who were eye-witnesses, and saw him alive, shall be held by him as inexcusable, and shall be condemned for their unbelief and hardness of heart.

Though salvation was of the Jews, it was not confined to them. The God of salvation is the God of the Jews, and of the Gentiles also. 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And whilst Jesus is the only Saviour, the only name given under heaven by which men must be saved; he is also the Saviour of all under heaven, of every region, and nation, and age. Hence the commission which Christ gave to his apostles was expressed in the most general terms. All to whom the gospel is preached, to whom the offer of God's mercy in Christ is made, have life and death, salvation and damnation, set before them. Christ endowed his apostles with such powers and gifts as enabled them to establish the authority of their commission, and to execute it with abundant success.

It was unnecessary that any of his disciples should see Christ rising from the dead; but a great number saw him ascending to heaven. In his ascension to heaven, and sitting at the right hand of God, his people have a pledge of his appearing a second time, to judge the world; and herein they may contemplate him not only as their forerunner, taking possession of the heavenly inheritance, but also as their king, exalted to the full dignity and exercise of sovereignty, having all power committed to him, and all fulness dwelling in him as head over all things to the church.

The darkest night may be followed by a bright and joyful day. They who seek Christ early, may find him sooner than they expect; and they who seek him earnestly, in spite of doubts and difficulties, may find their greatest fears disappointed, and their highest expectations abundantly exceeded. Peter was the object of Satan's most malicious assaults; and so was Mary Magdalene. But both were the objects of Christ's special care and tender compassion. For the grace of Christ abounds to the chief of sinners, to the vilest of the vile; not assuredly to countenance sin, but to prevent despair. Peter and Mary were indeed great sinners; but they were also great penitents, thoroughly contrite and broken-hearted mourners; and how encouraging the assurance, how strong the consolation, how glorious the hope set before all such in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. Rom. viii. 34.

PRAYER.

We would adore thee, O God of our salvation, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, through

whose almighty power, and unsearchable wisdom, and abundant mercy, there is salvation even to the chief of sinners. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the resurrection of his Son from the dead, hath given us the assurance of eternal redemption, and a lively hope of everlasting glory and happiness in heaven. And blessed be the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, who humbled himself even unto death, but whom God has highly exalted. O may he who arose from the dead, and ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men, according to his gracious promise, send the Spirit unto us in the fullness of his power, and in the riches of his grace, that he may take of the things that are Christ's and show them to us, and cause us to know and enjoy the things that are freely given to us of God. O may Christ be precious to us, as he is to them that believe. May we count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. And may we know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. May all flesh see the salvation of God; may all the nations of the earth know and acknowledge Jehovah to be the only true God, and Jesus the only Saviour. And may the gracious presence of Jesus be vouchsafed to those who go forth in his name preaching the gospel to perishing creatures. May they go in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. And whilst the treasure is in earthen vessels, may the excellency of the power evidently be of God and not of man. O God of Israel, remember thine ancient people, and speedily remove the veil from their hearts, that they may discern Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah, and rejoice in him as their Saviour and King. And give testimony to thy word, and countenance the ordinances of thy grace, administered by thy faithful servants throughout the churches. May they have an unction from the Holy One, that their hearts may be encouraged, and that the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in their hands.

O may all of us now before thee believe to the saving of the soul. May each of us know the blessedness of those who are in Christ Jesus, to whom there is no condemnation. May we this night lie down in peace with God; and may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. Vouchsafe thy blessing, O Lord, to all whom we ought in any way to remember before thee.

And now, Lord, watch over us continually,

and let thy favour compass us as a shield. And may the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, abide with us all for ever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIII. 10.

SCRIPTURE—NUMBERS XIV.

REMARKS.

A memorable crisis in the history of the Israelites is recorded in this chapter. Having reached the very borders of the promised land, they were suddenly commanded by God to return to the wilderness, and wander therein, until all the generation that had come out of Egypt, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, should be consumed and die; because by their unbelief, rebellions, and murmurings, they grieved the Spirit of God, and provoked him to anger, so that he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. The people, disregarding the encouraging account of Canaan, given by Caleb and Joshua, and influenced by the evil report of the other spies, began to murmur; at first manifesting their unbelief and discontent in loud lamentation and weeping; then in murmurings against Moses and Aaron; and at last in blasphemous reproaches against God himself. In their infatuation, they proposed to return to Egypt, and to stone the servants of God. God is provoked to destroy them: Moses intercedes for them. God punishes that generation, yet preserves them a separate people. In vindication of his righteousness in the destruction of the rebellious Israelites, God enumerates their various and aggravated provocations. On learning the purposes of God regarding them, the people, in some measure, became sensible of their loss and danger; but the spirit of unbelief and rebellion was not subdued. There was no true sense of sin, no real submission of heart to God. Accordingly they rushed headlong to danger, contrary to the command of God, and the advice of Moses. For, when men continue in unbelief, and harden their hearts in sin, they become ripe for destruction; and God may in righteous judgment leave them to their own devices, which will bring upon them swift destruction.

All these things happened to the Israelites as examples to us; and they are recorded for our instruction and warning. In their conduct, there is a remarkable exhibition of the sin of unbelief, of which one feature of peculiar malignity is presented to us in this chapter: for they not only distrusted or denied the glorious perfections of God, but also charged him with iniquity. We see that they could not enter into Canaan, though so near it, because of unbelief; and because of unbelief, thousands apparently not far from the kingdom of heaven, shall be excluded from the rest that remaineth to the people of God. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us

should seem to come short of it, or fall through the same example of unbelief. Let us beware of every measure of unbelief, as it is generally the origin of the discontent and murmuring and misery abounding in the world, and frequently brings down the displeasure of God upon his own people. For God may pardon iniquity, and yet allow men to feel the effects of their folly; he may save from hell, and yet not save from temporal calamity. How wonderful the power of prayer! 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' He who pleads the perfections of God, employs irresistible arguments, and will assuredly succeed. But it is in Christ that God fully displays his perfections; and in Christ only can man rightly discern them.

PRAYER.

O Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him? What are we, O Most High, that thou shouldst visit us every morning, and try us every moment? Thou hast preserved us during the night, and hast made the outgoings of the morning to rejoice over us. Father of lights, who hast again commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of thy glory, in the face of Jesus Christ. May the Spirit of all grace raise us from the dust, and quicken us; may he enlighten our minds and purify our hearts; may he increase our faith and our love, and may our fellowship truly be with the Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ. It becomes us, O Lord, to acknowledge with deep sorrow and shame, that we have rendered ourselves unworthy to appear in thy presence, and unfit to engage in thy service; for we have sinned and come short of thy glory. Give us a true sense of sin. May we indeed know and feel ourselves to be guilty, miserable, perishing creatures, without help or hope in ourselves. Justly mightest thou have required our souls of us, and given us over to eternal death, as the wages of our sin. But in thy great mercy hast thou spared us. We would regard it as a token for good, that we are still in the place of hope, and that thou art again permitting us to approach thy throne of grace, and hast not summoned us to thy judgment seat. Most merciful God, look upon us, and deal with us in Christ Jesus, through whom alone there is access to thee, the Father. Having such an High Priest to atone for our sins, and such an advocate to plead our cause, we beseech of thee, O God, that for his sake thou wouldst be merciful to our unrighteousness; our sins, and our iniquities remember no more. Speak peace to us: say unto each of us, Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. We are poor and needy; Lord, think upon us; remember us with the favour thou showest to thy chosen; and supply all our

need according to thy riches in glory, by Christ Jesus. Bless thy word to us as a means of grace. May it be a savour of life unto life to all, and a savour of death to none of us. Let us never judge of thy thoughts and ways according to our own. Let us never murmur at thy dispensations, or doubt thy faithfulness, because we may not now understand what thou doest. May thy Holy Spirit dwelling in us, enable us to spend our lives in submission to thy will, and dependence on thy promises, and conformity to thy law, and zeal for thy glory. O God, in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways, prepare us for the events of this day, for we know not what a day may bring forth. In duty or trial, in prosperity or adversity, we desire to commit ourselves to thee, our faithful Creator, and most merciful Saviour. Enable us to glorify thee in our bodies, and in our spirits, which are thine. May our bodies be kept in honour and purity, as the tabernacle of our spirits, and the temple of our God; and may our hearts be kept right with thee, realizing thy presence, and enjoying thy favour; so that, beholding the glory of the Lord, we may be transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. May we spend this and all our days in thy fear, remembering that thou, God, seest us in all our ways. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from all evil. Let goodness and mercy ever follow us. Hear us, Lord, in mercy; do to us and for us, exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, for the sake of Jesus Christ, thy Son and our Saviour. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXVIII. 6.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE I. 1—25.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The epithet 'most excellent,' indicates that Theophilus was a person of distinction, holding an important official station. His name signifies a 'lover of God,' and such seems to have been his character. Luke, who had perfect knowledge of the events he relates, addresses his history to Theophilus, to confirm his faith in Christianity. As Luke mentions many other histories of our Lord, which have all perished, with the exception of the other three evangelists, it is plain that they were early received and preserved in the Christian church, as possessing peculiar authority and value. The Levites, or priests, whose duty it was to minister in the temple, being very numerous, were divided into twelve families, or courses, each of which served in turn from sabbath to sabbath. Individuals were appointed by lot

to particular services. Thus Zacharias had been appointed by lot to burn incense. Whilst the priest offered up the daily sacrifice, and burned incense on the golden altar, the people were accustomed to assemble without, in the courts of the temple, and to offer up their prayers. Hence prayer is often compared to incense; and the Jews, wherever they might be, were in the habit of observing the hours of the morning and evening sacrifice as special seasons for prayer. This was a most appropriate typical representation of Christ, the high priest of our profession, appearing in the presence of God for us, making intercession on the ground of his atoning sacrifice, and presenting the prayers of the saints before God, perfumed with the incense of his own merits.

The birth of John the Baptist was attended with various circumstances which showed that he was a man highly honoured of God, and which were suitable to the vast importance of the office, and the great excellence of the character of him who should be the harbinger of Messiah, his forerunner, who should go before his face, and prepare the way of the Lord. His office and character were foretold by the prophet Isaiah, and also by Malachi, one of whose predictions regarding him concludes the Old Testament.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

‘Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.’ ‘The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.’ To them that sow righteousness shall be a sure reward. They who meekly submit to the will of God, and continue in prayer, though an answer be delayed, and cleave to the Lord even when he seems to disappoint their fondest hopes, shall find that the Lord’s time and way are the best, both for the exercise of their patience and hope, and for the display of his own power and special favour.

No one is sinless; but, by divine grace, true Christians may be blameless in the sight of men, and righteous even in the sight of God, through the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, and received by faith. God will, in faithfulness, chasten even the objects of his peculiar favour for the least symptom of unbelief, which is so dishonouring to him.

It is delightful and profitable to mark the fulfilment of prophecy. If the promises of God rejoiced the hearts of his people in ancient times, how much more ought our hope and confidence in God to be confirmed by the clear fulfilment of these promises, so faithfully recorded in the books of the New Testament, by men under the direction of the same Spirit who inspired the prophets. How great and glorious must the salvation of God be, seeing he made such wonderful preparations for its accomplishment! Even the forerunner of Messiah was made the subject of ancient prophecy; and in reference to him, God made miraculous displays of his character and glory. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, and what must be our condemnation if we despise Messiah himself, God’s own Son?

PRAYER.

Great art thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; thy greatness is unsearchable. The heavens declare thy glory, and the firmament sheweth thy handiwork: day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. All thy works and all thy ways demonstrate thine eternal power and Godhead. Thou hast never left thyself without a witness, in that thou doest good, and givest us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. But thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. O may the Spirit of all grace, by whose inspiration holy men of old spake and wrote, enlighten our understanding to discern the truth as it is in Jesus, and open our hearts to receive it in the love thereof. May the word of Christ dwell in us richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Preserve us, O Lord, from all presumptuous confidence in our own wisdom, strength, or goodness. Convince us that we know nothing, and can do nothing aright as of ourselves, and that in our flesh there is no good thing. Convince us that our hearts are deceitful and prone to evil; that we live in an ungodly, ensnaring world; and that we wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but also against principalities and powers, and against our adversary the devil who, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour. May we, through the Spirit, put on the whole armour of God, and in the strength of Christ, the Captain of our salvation, may we continue steadfast and unmovable always abounding in the work of the Lord, resisting the devil, overcoming the world, crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts. Let no presumptuous or besetting sin have dominion over us, lest, if we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us. And may the Spirit of holiness enable us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. Search us, O God, and know our hearts; try us, and know our thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting. May we this night, O Lord, experience the fulfilment of thy gracious promise, that where two or three are gathered together in thy name, there art thou in the midst of them. Lord Jesus, come even unto us; breathe on us, and say unto us, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. And may the Spirit of Christ abide with us for ever. And if there be any of us still dead in trespasses and sins, may he quicken them by his mighty power, and raise them to newness of life; may he slay the enmity of the carnal mind, and shed abroad the

love of God in their hearts, and abide in them as the Spirit of adoption, that without one exception, we all may walk together in the light, and life, and liberty, and joy of God's dear children. Graciously visit all those whom we ought to remember before thee. Comfort mourners in Zion. Speak peace to troubled souls. Give rest to them that labour and are heavy laden. Let all who trust in thee find that thou art a present help in time of need. And now, O Shepherd of Israel, watch over us this night. Give us the sleep of thy beloved. Whilst we live, may we live to the Lord, that in life or in death we may ever be the Lord's. And unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, one God, be everlasting glory and praise. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI. 16.

SCRIPTURE—NUMBERS XV.

REMARKS.

Many of the ceremonies prescribed in the law of Moses were not required to be performed except in the land of Canaan. The Lord demands no service of his people which he does not give them the means and opportunities of performing. The Mosaic institute was temporary and local. It was a bodily service, and a yoke of bondage. But they who worship God in the spirit, may do so not only at Jerusalem but everywhere. The different sacrifices signified the different acts and duties of religion. They were designed to set forth, 1. The pardon of sin. 2. Communion between God and the pardoned sinner. 3. Gratitude to God for his bounty and goodness. The law of Moses was, in Palestine, the law of the land. Jehovah was not only the spiritual, but civil ruler of the country. And no dissent could there be allowed, for the same reason that nations permit no dissent from their civil law: also to show that, though God does not immediately punish, yet he never tolerates dissent from the truth and righteousness enjoined by his law on all his reasonable creatures. If we will join ourselves to the Lord's people, hoping to partake of their privileges, we must be content to subject ourselves to their sacrifices and duties. He that will not resemble them in these, will not resemble them in those. Even the smallest of God's mercies deserves to be gratefully acknowledged. If daily bread be worth our asking, it is worth our thanks. As there is a great difference in point of guilt, so the law of God makes a wide distinction between sins of ignorance, and sins against knowledge. He that transgresses in the former way, is chargeable at the worst, with inattention and negligence; he that sins knowingly, despises the authority of God. Even sins of ignorance may not go without punishment. The Bible knows nothing of venial sins, though it makes a vast difference among sins in

respect of their guilt. Ignorance which is inevitable, is blameless. It will not avail us, however, to say 'we did not know,' when we might have known. By 'sins of ignorance,' in the Bible, are always meant sins which the individual had the means of knowing were sins, if he had used the opportunities of instruction which he possessed. For sins knowingly committed the law of Moses provided no atonement. Blessed be God, 'the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from all sin.' The man who gathered sticks on the sabbath, sinned presumptuously, and, therefore, he was put to death. It matters not how small or seemingly unimportant an action be, which is done in contempt of God. To despise the Lord never can be a trivial transgression. Obedience is often better tested by little things than by great. There was, so far as appears, no natural connection or resemblance between fringes on the borders of the garment, and the commands of God. Yet when those were expressly appointed to represent these, the one would instantly suggest the other. So that every time he dressed himself the Hebrew was taught the necessity of his putting on righteousness, and being clothed with it, as with a garment: and that obedience was an ornament no less than a defence. All the Jews seem to have worn these fringes, Matt. ix. 20. Doubtless many paid far more attention to them, than to that which they signified. Some make their phylacteries very broad, but their obedience very narrow, having much of the form, little of the power of godliness. We must neither dispense with outward institutions, on pretence that true religion is spiritual, and as such, has its seat in the heart; nor, on the other hand, must we put external ordinances out of their place. As means, they are invaluable: but we must never forget they are only means. They should be regarded as a good road is, excellent as affording us facility of proceeding to the place whither we are going. God, who never requires any thing of us without reason, has also authority to require what he does. And if his right, as being our creator and proprietor, admit of any increase, this would flow from his inestimable benefits. The people whom God has created, may well feel their obligations to serve him; the more so, as being the people whom he has also redeemed.

PRAYER.

O Lord God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, thou art the Shepherd of Israel, whose watchful providence and care are over all thy works. We approach thee in the name of him who was promised to the fathers, and foreshadowed by sacrifices and offices of the law; and whom all the prophets sang, and all thy saints of old expected with joyful hope. Thee, Father of mercies, eternal Jehovah; thee, Son of God, Saviour of the world; thee, blessed Spirit of grace, Comforter and guide; thee, our God, who livest for ever and ever, we magnify and praise. We sinners, dust and ashes, are permitted to speak unto God. We bless th

Father in heaven, that one is the Mediator between thee and us, who is our brother, and thy Son; and that, with the power of God, and the sympathy of man, he maketh intercession in thy presence, on our behalf. By the publication of thy mercy, we are encouraged to confess our sins. The Lord blot out all our innumerable transgressions, through Jesus Christ, our sacrifice and priest; and give us the assurance of thy favour, and conscious peace with thee. And may the Father and the Son dwell in us; may our bodies be temples of the Holy Ghost; our hearts, altars whence the smoke of many sacrifices, kindled by fire from heaven, may ascend before thee as incense. Let our old man be sacrificed in the strength of him who suffered in weakness, but liveth by the power of God, and whose strength is made perfect in the weakness of his members. Good Lord, who hast graciously preserved us during the past night, keep us, this day, from all bodily harm, and all spiritual danger. May we be sober, and watch unto prayer. May we be just in all our dealings, truthful in all our words, kind in all our behaviour, as in thy sight. May we not be conformed to this world, neither seek our portion in this life, but choose thee for our sure portion, and wait for the coming of thy Son. May our friends know thee, the true God, and Jesus thy Son, whom thou hast sent. Pardon our enemies. Bless all men. Refresh and enlarge thy church. Let thy word run and be glorified, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we address thee, Our Father, &c.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXV. 9.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE I. 26—45.

REMARKS.

John, one of the greatest of the prophets, is sent as precursor of Jesus, and Gabriel, one of the most exalted angels, is commissioned to announce him. How great must he be who is thus attended! Gabriel goes to a despised region, and there to a poor woman, living in a poor cottage, yet whose heart was a palace of 'the king, the Lord of hosts.' God loves to honour that which men despise, and to abase that which they honour. For he estimates things and persons according to their real worth. The angel salutes the virgin as a saint, he does not pray to her as a goddess. Yet she is worthily remembered of men, whom the angel proclaimed 'beloved of God.' We would not falsify her own prediction, 'All generations shall call me blessed,' or happy. 'The troubles of holy minds end ever in comforts.' 'Fear not, thou hast found favour with

God,' is a message which may well inspire confidence, 'For thy benignity is better than life. Wonderful in itself was the intelligence which Mary received in this wonderful manner, and also wonderful as it respected her. News affects us more, as it more nearly concerns ourselves. The promise of Messiah's advent was the most glorious that heaven ever sent to earth. But what did Mary hear? that she was to be the mother of God's Son, who was the consolation of Israel, the hope of the fathers and the desire of all nations, to whom his Father should give the throne of David,—an endless reign! By the greatness of his benefits, God is wont to exceed our greatest expectations, yea, our highest imaginings. Mary does not question what is told her, but it perplexes her. We may modestly seek resolution of our difficulties, lest they grow into doubts, which, constantly surging in the soul, may gradually wash away the foundations of our faith. God gives us the evidences of his power and faithfulness as pillars to support our staggering faith. Unbelief springs from confining our regards to man; faith comes from the contemplation and knowledge of God. Nothing in the world can be so incredible as that God should lie, or that his power should not be able to do any thing whatever. As when God would humble, so when he would honour us, we are not to hold disputation with him. Let us say with Mary, 'Be it unto me according to thy word.' Christ formed in us, and dwelling in our hearts, is not less a miracle and yet more a blessing, than that which was granted to the mother of Jesus. May Christ be formed in our hearts the hope of glory, and dwell in our hearts by faith.

PRAYER.

O thou faithful God, who, in the fulness of the times, didst send forth thy Son made of a woman, we adore thy mercy and thy love, thus manifested to the world. For the world lay before thee, bitten to death by the serpent, whose head thy Son hath now bruised, and whose works he came to destroy, not without labour, and much suffering, and baptism with blood, and tasting of death. Adored be the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich. And now, since God is made flesh, and Christ is become the Son of man, and our brother, by taking of our humanity, may we also receive his Spirit, be made partakers of a divine nature, and become sons of God. And though we have borne the image of the earthy man, and through him are heirs of sin and death, may we be created anew in the image of the heavenly Adam, and become heirs with him of eternal life. Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, make us, though unworthy, thy sons by faith in Christ; restore to us the character and privileges of thy children, and also the Spirit, whereby they cry, Abba, Father. And may we have the confidence of children in

thee, the love, the holy desire in all things, even the least, to please thee. Let it be our meat and drink to do thy will. Forgive, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, the sins and imperfections of the past day. O cleanse us from secret faults, keep back thy servants also from presumptuous sins. May we, from day to day, grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. With more earnestness and less reserve, may we daily offer up our bodies living sacrifices to thee, the living God: and the good Lord make us perfect in every good work to do thy will, working in us that is pleasing in thy sight. Shepherd of Israel, watch over us this night, guarding us from all bodily and spiritual evil. And if we awake not in this world, may we awake in a better, where is day without night, and joy without sorrow, and life without death. We commend all men to thy mercy, our friends to thy love and care. Reward our benefactors, forgive and bless our enemies. And these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LVI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—NUMBERS XVI.

REMARKS.

The sacred history is not only a record of facts, but an exhibition of doctrine, and a lesson of duty; 'being, though literally true, yet pregnant with a perpetual allegory.' This chapter contains instruction, reproof, correction, &c. as necessary as abundant. The sins of the world, and of the church, are written in the punishments of both. The best government, best administered, is not sufficient to prevent murmurs among the governed. When God was lawgiver, and Moses was judge, Israel complained 'we was an oppressed people.' Who says, wherever there is general dissatisfaction, there is bad government? Not the Bible, nor they who have learned of it. Surely ambition is insane. For how hard is power to be obtained, how difficult to be used! If well exercised, it gets no thanks; and if ill, no mercy, no consideration. The owner of it is full of care and anxiety, surrounded with envy, jealousy, and reproach. People are ever ready to believe those who assure them that themselves are good, and their rulers are bad; even though there be the clearest proofs of their rulers' virtue, and their own corruption. He that is conscious of integrity may well be confident in the midst of calumny, and may appeal to God who searcheth the hearts. Men's advancement, instead of satisfying, only whets their ambition. The lust of power, as of money, has no bounds. Satan was high even among the dominions of heaven, but 'thought that one step higher would set him

highest.' Let us consider, that if we mount one step higher on the ladder than our appointed place, that step will break and project us to the bottom. If temporal ambition be dangerous, spiritual ambition is damnable. How bold sinners are in their impiety! Instead of acknowledging, they justify their transgression. Moses, the instrument of their mercies, they charge with being the cause of their miseries, and they attribute their sufferings (the fruit of their own sins) to him whose prayers had, by God's grace, saved them often from death. Whom God hath chosen, God will acknowledge. Being conscious of acting with godly sincerity, we need not fear to appeal to him. All the congregation to whom Moses had been as a nursing-father, and for whom he was willing to die, take part against him, and with his enemies. The ingratitude of those we love, is more bitter than death. And have we not taken part against thee, O Jesus, though thou didst shed thy precious blood for us! Let our rebellions, which have pierced thee, O Saviour, pierce us also! They who pretend the people are never discontented, except when they are ill governed, know neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. They are ignorant of all history, sacred and secular. When Israel mutinied, was not Jehovah king and Moses his deputy? We must separate ourselves from God's enemies, else we shall not be able to separate ourselves from their punishment. 'Come out of her, my people, and be not partakers of her plagues.' How merciful is Moses! He would not have those punished who were ready to stone him. He prays for the unthankful people. The spiritual mind, and the carnal mind, are ever true each to itself. There is difference of guilt and of punishment between those who seduce others, and those who are seduced by them to sin. We may not be able to foretell the particular manner in which sinners will be punished; but that they will be punished (except they repent) is as certain as that there is a God who is just. Signal and notorious sins will meet with signal and terrible judgments. Korah and his associates were lately shouting against meek Moses, in wanton malice; now they are shouting in the jaws of inevitable perdition. The congregation who are so terrified by their punishment, were not at all afraid of their sin. The saint fears sin; the sinner fears only the wages of it. O let us be warned. The enemies of the Lord, and of his servants, shall go alive into the pit, whence the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever. God turns sinners' punishments into monuments to warn others. The masts of the wrecked ship serve for beacons. Let no man take upon himself any office in the church, unless he be regularly called thereto. No man must decide upon his own fitness and qualification. Self-love is too partial to judge fairly. When men will persevere in blindness and obstinacy, God will make them feel the full weight of his anger. Sinners will blame any one but themselves, who alone are blame-worthy. While speaking against Moses, they are in truth blaspheming God, who so understands their murmurs. And since others' destruction will not instruct them, he sends it on themselves. Men who will not be taught, must be destroyed. We might sup-

pose Moses and Aaron now so exasperated, that they should feel no concern about so stiff-necked a generation. Quite otherwise. Moses directs, and Aaron makes atonement. So didst thou, O prophet and priest of thy spiritual Israel! These words thy last breath uttered, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.'

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who didst give Moses to be a prophet and leader, Aaron to be a priest to thine ancient Israel, we thank thee, that thou hast given unto us Jesus thy Son, to be our prophet, priest, and king. We praise thee, O God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for what he performed and suffered on earth, and for what he still does in heaven. We acknowledge, with humble gratitude, his divine instructions, illustrated by his most holy life: his humbling himself to death for our sins; his conquest of death, and satan, and all the powers of darkness; his resurrection and exaltation at thy right hand in heaven; together with those precious gifts of the Holy Ghost, which he hath given to his church. O God, with shame we confess that, as the ancient Israel rebelled against Moses and Aaron, thy messengers to them, so have we rebelled against the more glorious messenger, our Lord Jesus Christ. Like them, we have rebelled against infinite love; and we have, like them, resisted our own good, and sought our own destruction. Lord, let us be pardoned and accepted, even through the intercession of him whose authority we have often cast off, but who has not cast us off from his compassion and love. May we wash in the fountain of his blood and be clean. The Lord take away the stony heart out of our flesh. And may we now at length submit to infinite power, infinite holiness, infinite love and mercy. Thou desirest not our death. May we not seek that which thou dost not delight in, and is our own ruin. Each day we need anew to implore thy mercy to pardon us. May we have faith to be healed, and being justified by faith, may we have peace with thee. May we also rejoice in the hope of thy glory: yea, may we rejoice in all trials, which are sent to prepare us for this blessed consummation. And may thy love be abundantly shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost. May our past sins cause us daily grief; and thy forgiving love, daily joy and thankfulness; and, confidently believing thou hast first loved us, may we love thee. Let thy Spirit witness with our spirits that we are thy children, and heirs with thy dear Son. O let us know that we know thee, by the spirit thou givest to thy children. Gracious God, may we keep all thy commandments, for

to them that love thee they are not grievous, but light and pleasant. We pray thee to enlighten, bless, and save all men. Be the God of our friends. Reward our benefactors. May we love our enemies, and do good to them that injure us. Keep us, O Shepherd of Israel, during this day, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXXVI. 3.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE I. 46—80.

REMARKS.

God's mercies and favours are only thrown away upon those whom they do not move to gratitude and praise. Next to our sins, the goodness of God is most fitted to excite us to humility. Congenial souls are not soon tired of each other's company. And there is no congeniality so perfect, no affection either so pure or so strong, as those which unite the children of God. The flesh binds not so powerfully or closely as the Spirit. What God promises, how strange or impracticable soever, he will in due time perform. A son was a blessing; a son, by promise of God, an especial blessing; and the assurance that he should be not only a great prophet, but the forerunner of Messiah, this made the cup of Zacharias and Elisabeth run over, and their hearts run over with holy joy and thankfulness. That which God hath given must be given to God. The child, who was a mark of God's faithfulness, must bear in his body the mark of God's covenant. He must also bear the name which God gave him before he was born. Express divine appointments must overrule mere human customs and apparent proprieties. He that will obey God, must obey him in that which is least as well as in that which is greatest. Unbelief dishonours God; when it speaks it blasphemes him. Zacharias read his sin in his punishment. But when his distrust was removed his dumbness was cured, and he has now power to speak when he is qualified to utter God's praises. God frequently draws attention to that which his servants are to deliver from him, by first drawing attention to their persons. When the Lord is evidently making preparation, we may be sure something of note will follow. They that reverently observe God's ways, will always find something worthy of being observed. 'The tongue of the dumb shall sing.' Zacharias is not only enabled to speak, but to speak such things as he never uttered or conceived before. He that a little ago would not believe that he could have a son, now celebrates not only the birth of that son, but the advent of the Son of the Highest, whose way his own child should prepare. As unbelief is blind and deaf, so let it be dumb also, till it learn to disown itself. Zacharias is now filled with the Holy Ghost, which, though not so fully given till after Christ's ascension, was often granted before. And he sings of salvation from all miseries, and from sin their parent—and this for men of every clime and every age. ()

Lord, open our lips and our mouth shall sing aloud of thy praise.' He that is destined for extraordinary employments needs an extraordinary preparation. The man who is to appear in the face of the world, and is to converse much with all sorts of men, requires to converse much with God in solitude, and to sound the depths of his own heart. And he only is likely to prove superior both to the favours and frowns of men, who has a lively sense of the power and presence, the wrath and favour of God.

PRAYER.

O God, our heavenly Father, who knowest the end from the beginning, and callest the things which are not as though they were, we adore and praise thee. Manifold and rich are thy promises to them that fear and love thee, and yet thou doest ever exceed, in the fulfilment, that thou hast spoken. O how great is thy loving-kindness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, for them that trust in thee before the sons of men. Blessed be thou that thou hast visited and redeemed thy people. May we be delivered from all our enemies, and serve thee, without fear, in holiness and righteousness all our days. May the light which is come into the world, guide our feet into the way of peace. Shine into our hearts, O God, giving us the knowledge of thyself in the fear of Jesus Christ. May we know thee as our God, and the author of all good; thy Son Jesus Christ as the deliverer from all evil; and may we know our own ignorance, guilt, and misery to be such that thou only canst deliver us from them: and out of Christ's fulness may we receive even grace for grace. O God, forgive all our sins for Christ's sake, who died for our sins and rose again for our justification. And may all the sins which are pardoned be hated and crucified; and may we yield ourselves as servants unto God. Let thy will be ours in all things. Give us humble, meek, patient, and resigned spirits. May we joy in God and have no confidence in the flesh. Heavenly Father, may we be daily more humbled by our imperfections and barrenness. Cut us not down as cumberers of the ground. But spare us, good Lord, and may we henceforth be neither barren nor unfruitful in thy work. Graciously keep us during the silent watches of the night; and may we live in preparation for the endless day to which thy children shall awake, when the night and sleep of death are ended. All that we ask is in the name of the Lord Jesus, our advocate. Amen. Our Father, &c.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXIX. 1—4.

SCRIPTURE—NUMBERS XVII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

'It is in the hand of the Lord to make great, and to give strength unto all.' He is the fountain of honour. He chose the tribe of Judah to be above the rest as to royalty. He chose Levi's tribe for the priesthood; and of that tribe Aaron to be high priest. And we know a greater than Aaron, of whom he says, 'Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth:' a prophet, and priest, and king, all in one, whose name ever endureth—whose priesthood is everlasting.

In every well regulated society there is subordination; there is gradation of ranks: the head and the members; the rulers and the ruled. And so, in the church of God, God is the God of order and of peace. That there might be no dispute, among the tribes of Israel, upon whom the honour of the high priesthood should devolve, the rods or sceptres of each tribe are appointed to be disposed in regular order, the name of each prince written upon the rod; and the rods are left all night before the ark; in the morning the rod of Aaron is covered with blossoms and almonds; those of the other tribes remain dry as before.

Aaron's rod that budded, which was laid up for a token against the rebels, and which continued for ages in this state, became a fit emblem of the Messiah's resurrection, as declarative of his priesthood being acceptable to God; nothing being more fit to represent one raised from the dead, than a dead branch restored to vegetable life, and made to blossom and bring forth fruit.

Rebellion and insubordination are suppressed sometimes by awful judgments, as in the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; at other times, as here, by the manifestation of God's sovereignty in the distribution of his special favours.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and submit ourselves to him in all things. Beware of unholy ambition and rivalry; of emulation and strife; of, Diotrephe-like, loving to have the pre-eminence; or with the disciples, striving which shall be the greatest. Let us take warning from the rebellion among the tribes, which could scarcely be suppressed even by miracles, forcing upon them the sense of a present Deity, and alarming them with dread of summary vengeance. Let our submission be willing, and not forced or constrained, as theirs seems to have been. The spirit of the gospel is not of 'fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.'

Behold, a greater than Aaron is here—the great high priest of our profession, who hath an unchangeable priesthood; the rod of whose strength is sent out of Zion, and who ruleth in the midst of his enemies.

Let us give glory and honour to the Son, even as we honour the Father. To him 'let every knee

bow, let every tongue confess.' Seek to be united to the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may resemble the rod that budded, and blossomed, and brought forth fruit; and let none of us be barren and unfruitful. Ministers of the gospel, more especially, should not resemble the dry wood, but the fruit-bearing almond rod of Aaron; exhibiting holiness in their conversation, and usefulness in their ministry.

PRAYER.

Almighty and everlasting God, which art, and wast, and art to come; who livest and reignest for ever and ever; who givest life to all that live, and breath to all the inhabitants of the earth, we, thy dependent creatures, sinful dust and ashes, have undertaken to speak unto thee, and to call upon thy name. A glorious high throne, from the beginning, is the place of sanctuary to thy people, even the throne of grace; above it are the cherubim and seraphim, with their wings covering their feet, and who cry, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is full of thy glory.' How shall we stand before thee, we who are of unclean lips, and who dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips? So awful is the view of thy holiness and glory, and so humbling to us poor sinners, that we are ready to tremble, and cannot behold. We should exceedingly fear and quake at a sight so terrible, but we view the glory of Christ, of God manifest in flesh—our kinsman Redeemer, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and we are at once humbled and encouraged. We come boldly to the throne of grace, through him who is our great high priest, passed through the heavens, and who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and we implore mercy and grace for seasonable help. We rejoice in the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star; the true Aaron, yea, the true Melchizedek, the priest upon his throne, the alpha and omega, the living one who was dead, but is now alive and liveth for evermore, and who hath the keys of hell and of death. We rejoice in the rod with which, as a shepherd, he feeds and protects his flock; and in his rod of power and authority, as king as well as high priest, to defend and rule his church, and to subdue all his and our enemies. Go forth, O thou mighty One, with thy sword on thy thigh, in glory and majesty, yet in meekness, truth, and righteousness. Let thine arrows be sharp in the hearts of thine enemies; that the people may fall under thee in willing subjection. Upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name, thou hast said thou wilt pour out thy fury; but we desire, O Lord, to give thee the glory due to thy name,

as our God, Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter; our God in covenant, we would flee from the wrath to come, we would lay hold upon eternal life. We would keep the passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest the destroyer should touch us. We would come under the shelter of the blood of atonement, and have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And we pray, O Lord, that we may all of us be thy children, by adoption and by regeneration, receiving Christ Jesus the Lord for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; putting on Christ Jesus, not making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. We pray, most gracious God and Father in Christ Jesus, that the blessings we ask for ourselves may be imparted also to all whom we should remember before thee, that they and we may be one in Christ Jesus; and that the blessings of thy grace may descend copiously, and rest upon the heads and the members of the several families around us, and throughout the land. And we do now, most gracious God, offer thee the tribute of our thanks for the mercies of the preceding night and of this new day; and in the name, and in the words of our Lord, we would sum up our requests, saying, Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXVIII. 1—4.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE II. 1—24.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—6. The decree issued by the Roman emperor, for the enrolment of all the families of that vast empire, called, in the style of that great and haughty people, 'the whole world,' is an event of importance and notoriety, which fixes the date, most unquestionably and fully, of the birth of the Messiah.

A great, a mighty, and far-famed emperor reigned over the greatest nation on earth, who issues his important and high decree; but an event takes place, by the world, at the time, unnoticed and unknown, of far greater importance than all the fortunes of the most august of the Cæsars, the advent of the Son of God, the Saviour, whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, &c. Ver. 6—8. 'And so it was.' Mary, enrolled at Bethlehem, according to prediction, is thus publicly recognised as the lineal descendant of the house of David, with Joseph, her husband, of the same family. Wonderful are the ways of divine providence, in thus making the counsels and decrees of men to praise him, executing his supreme decree. Behold greatness combined with meanness; the greatness real, the meanness only apparent; the blessed virgin bringing forth her son, the heir of David—in his divine nature, the heir of all things. Judge not by appearances. He who is the Lord of

all, grows up not as a wide-spreading cedar, or majestic oak, but as 'a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.'

During the watches of that memorable night, an event thus takes place, first in importance in the annals of time. It is signalized by the throng of angels, by a multitude of the heavenly host, who sing, 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good-will to men.' In this sinful apostate world, which resembles the sea which cannot rest, there has seldom been a pause from fierce contests. But at this time, when the Saviour was born, the temple of Janus was shut, the symbol of universal peace through the Roman empire, the world; while glory redounds to God in the highest, compared with whom, even Augustus Cæsar is but a worm. Humble shepherds are made first acquainted with the great and blessed events of the nativity, while the inhabitants of the palace are passed by; and they justly count themselves highly honoured by this communication, and, trusting the care of their flocks to him who never slumbereth, they repair to the scene where the heavenly babe was born, 'they then made known abroad the saying told them concerning the child, and returned praising God.' Ver. 19. What, meantime, were the feelings of the mother of Jesus? These cannot be imagined or described. 'Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.' Ver. 21—24. Every thing was done according to the law, in regard to circumcision and presentation in the temple. Thus it behoved that all righteousness should be fulfilled in regard to the Messiah, as well as by him.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us mark, admire, and adore the wondrous ways of the Lord, in the time, place, and circumstances of our Saviour's nativity. Nothing is contingent; nothing of chance; every thing by all wise, determinate counsel and foreknowledge. Go to the stable and manger of Bethlehem, and learn humility and contentment, even in mean circumstances. Repair to the plain where the shepherds tend their flocks by night; realize by faith, in holy meditation, the amazing events then announced, and the celestial harmony of the angelical hosts. Have you not still greater reason than the angels to praise and to rejoice? Why should you be insensible of your unspeakable mercies, while the angels proclaim them with joy? O why do you not all cry out with rapture, Glory to God in the highest, glory to the prince of peace, glory to the Holy Spirit for the amazing good-will to men!

PRAYER.

O thou ruler of all, God of our lives, length of our days, our times are in thy hand, and we desire to acknowledge that we are thine. The day, O Lord, is thine, the night also is thine. To the close of another day and of another week thou hast brought us. Another portion of our precious time is gone. We anticipate the commencement of the sabbath of rest suspending our worldly occupation, and giving us a respite

from our ordinary cares. We thank thee, O Lord, for that great salvation which, in the fullness of time, has been brought near to us; and that we are privileged to join with, and to emulate, the angels in their song. With glory to thee, O Lord, every morning should begin, and every evening close. Every successive week, and month, and year; every sabbath, and every sacramental season, invites us to meditate of and to celebrate the wondrous doings of the Lord, in nature, in providence, and in grace. Many, O Lord, are the wonderful things thou hast wrought, while blind, thoughtless, rebellious man observes not the operation of thy hand, neither regardeth thy doings. We would magnify thy works which we behold. Especially would we look with holy wonder into the great mystery of redemption, God dwelling with men! humanity joined to divinity! the Lord of all a babe in the manger at Bethlehem; angels celebrating his birth, while humble shepherds are the heralds of the event; the greatest event silently taking place, the great ones of the earth unconscious of it, which has produced the most important revolution in the history of the world, for lo, the prophecy is fulfilled, 'I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come;' and, 'the stone cut out of the mountain without hands shall fill the whole earth.' Now is come salvation, the tabernacle of God is with men! We have access, both Jew and Gentile, through one Mediator, by one Spirit, to the Father. We would ascribe to thee, most High, the glory in the highest; we would bless thee for the peace made by the blood of the cross, and sealed by the Spirit in the hearts of thy children; and we would rejoice in the good-will shown to rebellious men, that God, the Lord, might dwell among them. And we pray, O Lord, that we, now before thee, one family, may be one in Christ Jesus, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed; that we may be accepted in our morning and evening sacrifices, and enjoy the blessedness of those whose God is the Lord. To thee, O Lord, we commend all the concerns of thy church and people; praying that peace may be with them, and mercy, and on all the Israel of God; and that thy way may be known on earth, and thy saving health among all nations. And we pray that there may be preparation, this evening, throughout this land of light and of sabbaths, for the services of the approaching holy day; that thy ministers may be assisted in their studies, and blessed in their souls; that they may come forth, fully fraught with the blessings of the gospel of peace, and may there

be great grace, and mercy, and peace multiplied upon all thy people. And now, O Lord, we commend ourselves to thy gracious protection during the night watches. Let no plague come nigh our dwelling. Give us to rest in quietness of body and of mind, and to rise rejoicing in thy love. Blot out, we beseech thee, all our sins, and the iniquities of our holy things. Hear us and answer us, for our blessed Redeemer's sake. Amen.

TWELFTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCII.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XXXVI.

REMARKS.

Atheism is the root of all evil, the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death; but when the fear of God is wanting, nothing truly good can be expected. To the wise and devout observer of mankind, the works and ways of the multitude around declare most plainly and undeniably that they are utterly destitute of the principle of religion—the fear of God. It is still a part of the language of indictments in the law of the land, ‘that such a one casting off the fear of God did so and so.’ A reason this, surely, why the fear of God should be taught and inculcated as an essential part of good rule as well as of internal culture of the mind and of the heart. From human depravity, from the contemplation of man the greatest foe to man, how delightful to turn with the psalmist to the divine character, and in direct devout address. Ver. 5—7. ‘Thy mercy is in the heavens,’ &c. The view of the mercy of Jehovah is indeed delightful and pleasing, like the eye looking on the blue serene vault of heaven: his faithfulness and truth are also marked as with a sun beam; his righteousness is not like man’s, movable as the vapour, yet deceiving the eye as if solid; but like the mountains, the most stable and durable of all material things: and his ‘judgments,’ not shallow and superficial like those of men, but profound and inscrutable like the unseen movements and secrets of the mighty deep. These glorious perfections are not only to be subjects of solemn reflection, but also of immediate devotional address in prayer, adoration, thanksgiving, and expressions of holy confidence, as these perfections are gloriously manifested in the face of Christ Jesus. Ver. 7. Our Saviour bids us behold ‘the fowls of the air how our heavenly Father feedeth them,’ and to infer that he will never cease to provide for his own people: and so the psalmist here, ‘Lord, thou preservest man and beast, how excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God; therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.’ Ver. 8, 9. Better blessings still than those of earth, than

food and raiment, are enjoyed by God’s people, even ‘the goodness of his house,’ the precious and soul-satisfying provision, and regaling feast, and reviving draught from the river which gladdens the city of God. The fountain is in Jehovah himself, and can never fail as the streams of earthly joy always do. The water of life proceeds from the throne of God, and of the Lamb. God also is ‘light,’ and he that knows the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, may be said to dwell in the midst of light, and is thereby enlightened, and enlivened, and truly blessed. Ver. 10, 11. Thus is encouragement given to pray for the continued enjoyment of the Lord’s special mercies, and their effects to be vouchsafed still more and more to his people: and his holy, faithful, and righteous dealings in behalf of the upright in heart, who shall most assuredly have the ‘dominion in the morning’ of deliverance, and in the resurrection, so that the insolent sons of pride shall not be permitted to move a foot against them, nor the hand of violence to shake them from their confidence and firm standing. Ver. 12. The conclusion is in the language of holy triumph, like that of Moses and the Israelites, when they saw Pharaoh and his host lying lifeless on the shore of the Red sea; ‘there are the workers of iniquity fallen, they are cast down and will not be able to rise.’

PRAYER.

O thou, most great, most holy, most wise, most faithful, most merciful Jehovah, who art above all, and through all, enthroned in glory, sitting between the cherubims, whom all the hosts of heaven obey, whom all thy saints love and works praise, and whom legions of rebel angels fear and dread, thy name is venerable, thy works are to be admired; thou art God alone! This day especially thou art in thy temple to be held in reverence, whilst, as the God of Israel, thou givest strength and power to thy people. We thank thee, O most blessed God, for the revelation of the Sun of righteousness, the brightness of thy glory, and the express image of thy person; who, upholding all things by the word of his power, has by himself purged our sins, and is now, in our nature, at thy right hand. In him we rejoice that there is a glorious union and harmony of thy mercy and truth, of thy righteousness and grace. We pray, most gracious Father, in Christ Jesus our Lord, that we may be made to know experimentally, and savingly, what it is to delight ourselves in thee, as rich in mercy to all that call upon thee, as faithful in keeping covenant with thy chosen One, on whom our help is laid, as immovable in thy regards and in thy engagements to thy people, for thou art the Rock of ages, the dwelling-place of thy people, in all generations. We desire, O Lord, to bless thy name, that we are invited this day to come to thy house, to thy feast of fat things; to thyself

is Jehovah, our provider, our healer, our banner, our peace, our righteousness, our sun, our shield, who givest peace and glory, and withholdest no good from thy children; and we pray, holy Father, that we may come near even to thy seat, that we may wait upon thee humbly and heartily, that we may draw nourishment to our souls from thy blessed word, through the influences of thy Spirit and blessing; comfort from thy precious promises; warning from thy threatenings and reproofs; direction and light from thy perfect precepts, so that we may not err from the straight line of duty and of safety; and O may we so occupy this blessed day, this golden portion of time, that the fruits may appear good and abundant many days hence. Our Father in heaven, we pray that thy great name may this day, and every day, be hallowed here, and in every place, and more especially that through the means of thy faithful word and precious ordinances, there may be wonders of power and of grace done in the name, and by the power of the Lord Jesus among us, by thy servant our pastor; and on all the churches an abundant out-pouring of thy Holy Spirit, making the whole hill of Zion, even thy church, and all places around, a blessing. O send down showers of blessings, and so let thy kingdom advance, and thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. And now, O Lord, what wait we for, but thy blessing to be on us, now worshipping, as we trust, in one of the dwellings of Jacob, who are about to worship thee in the gates of Zion, which thou lovest still more, when we would rejoice soon to have fellowship with thee, and with thy people. We commend ourselves to thy gracious care and keeping, O thou hearer of prayer, and fountain of light, and of comfort, of holiness, and of peace! Pardon all our sins, O Lord, and the sin which has attended us in this approach to thy holy presence, and hear us, and do far above what we are able to ask or to think, for our blessed Redeemer's sake, to whom, with thee, O Father, and the ever blessed Spirit, be all honour, and glory, and blessing, and praise, now, and for ever more. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CL.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XXXVII.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. It is at once foolish and sinful to allow our own peace of mind to be disturbed, because the wicked often are prosperous in this world; the fading

grass, and withering herbs of the field and garden, might serve to correct this error, for these afford fit emblems of the evanescent nature of all earthly glory. The best remedy for this evil, and at the same time, the means of attaining true and lasting blessedness, is faith—trust, scripturally warranted and divinely taught, in the promise and perfections of Jehovah, as our God and Father in Christ. And the effect of this will be, to place our happiness in God, as our God, and portion,—in God himself, and not merely in his gifts. The felicity of the ungodly such as it is, is of very short duration, 'the pleasures of sin for a season.' Ver. 9, 10, 13, 17, 38. The felicity of the ungodly is at length exchanged for destruction, not only the punishment of loss, but of positive misery. Ver. 3, 5—8, 27, 34. It is the duty and privilege of the godly, to persevere in faith, in patience, and in pursuit and practice of holiness. Ver. 11, 21, 30. The pious are meek, beneficent to the needy, and much addicted to the study and the inculcating of the word of God. His heart meditates wisdom, and his tongue gives utterance to it, while his temper and his life adorn and recommend it. Ver. 3, 4, 6, 9, 11, 19, &c. Even in this life, the Lord usually shows his special favour to the pious; he takes charge of them, and defends them in dangers. Ver. 12, 14, 32—40. The impious plot the destruction of the godly, but in vain, for their salvation is of the Lord; and his name is a strong tower to which they run, and are safe. Ver. 14, 15. Oftentimes the stratagems of the ungodly are made to recoil upon themselves. Even a heathen poet hath remarked that the wicked plotter falls by his own device. Like another Haman, who was suspended upon the gibbet he had erected for Mordecai. They fall into the ditch they have digged for another. Ver. 19. In a season of scarcity, the pious comfort themselves with this promise, that God will feed them and satisfy them with bread. Ver. 25. David gives us, as the result of his own experience, and comforts the children of the pious, with this, that he never knew the posterity of God's people begging their bread. An eminent divine (Dr A. Clark) mentions, that his own observation during the course of a pretty long life, and through a very extensive range, confirmed the psalmist's words. This is, doubtless, very comfortable and encouraging, both to pious parents and children. They know, doubtless, what hunger is, and what it is to be in straits, yet the Lord does appear often very wonderfully in behalf of his people, feeding them as it were by the instrumentality of the ravens, like the prophet, raising up for them very unexpected succour: their extremity is God's opportunity. The title, 'Jehovah Jireh,' is most encouraging; 'The Lord will provide.' On the mount he will appear. Gen. xxii.

Beware, O believer, of a querulous spirit, of envying the prosperity of the wicked. When Caractacus, a king of the ancient Britons, carried in triumph to Rome as a prisoner, saw the grand buildings of that capital of the world, he expressed his wonder, that they, who possessed such splendid palaces should envy the poor cottages of Britain.

O learn, believer, more and more to live by faith, to trust more simply and implicitly on God's pro-

misses and covenant, and seek to find your happiness, not only from God, but in God: joying and glorying in him, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have obtained reconciliation.

PRAYER.

O God of all grace, whose we are, and whom we are bound to love, and worship, and obey; we again bend before thee, the God of all the families of Israel, and with David, would we return from public services of the day, to seek a blessing on our own household. Thou, O most glorious and blessed God, hast permitted many of us this day to join the worshipping assembly, to contemplate thy majesty and thy loving-kindness in the midst of thy temple, and to hear the blessed truths of thy word, which are able to make us wise unto salvation. There we have had thy word nigh to us, in our mouth, in our ear, and, we would hope, also in our hearts. Thou hast spoken to us, and we have been permitted 'to speak unto the Lord, we who are dust and ashes.' It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed. Here we are assembled around this domestic altar, to give thee praise; to implore thy pardoning mercy, and thy renewing and quickening grace. May we hide thy word in our hearts, that we may not sin against thee. May we not only be hearers, but doers of thy word. O that our ways were directed to keep thy commandments, then shall we not be ashamed when we have respect unto all thy righteous judgments; we will keep thy precepts. O leave us not to ourselves, but establish us. By constant reference to the truths of thy blessed word, building ourselves upon our most holy faith, by prayer in the Holy Ghost, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, to eternal life, would we desire to keep alive the flame of thy love in our hearts, and to enjoy a continued sense of thy favour. O Lord our God, undertake for us, help us for the glory of thy name. Bless us as a family; O if there be any of us unconverted, still strangers to the power and life of godliness, merely bowing the knee with others while the heart is unhumbled, and the carnal mind, in its enmity against thee, still holding out; O that this may be the day of thy power, in which such shall be made willing; in which, by the mighty energy of thy word and spirit, the strong-holds of pride, and of self-righteousness, and of ungodliness, and of worldliness, shall be brought down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted. O that every heart here may be a throne and an altar for thee; every body and soul a temple, in which Jehovah, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, shall reign supreme! For our friends also, and our brethren,

we would pray that they may enjoy the peace of thy children; for their good, as well as our own, we will seek the prosperity of Zion, and that there may be many obtaining that salvation which thou hast appointed therein, for Israel thy people, that they may be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation! May the Lord God make known to all men his salvation. Let men of every nation, of every colour, of every tongue, be blessed in Messias, and call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things! Blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory! O Lord, hear our humble and united prayers: in thy great mercy for our blessed Redeemer's sake blot out all our sins. Grant us all the blessings we need, and far above what we can ask or think; and to thee, the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost, one ever blessed Jehovah, be glory, and honour, and praise, now and evermore. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CVI.

SCRIPTURE—NUMBERS XX.

REMARKS.

The great design of the Bible is to teach us 'what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.' In the prosecution of this design, the sacred writers are often brief where other writers would enlarge, and as often diffuse where other writers would be entirely silent. Accordingly, while the first year of the wanderings of the children of Israel is minutely dwelt upon by the sacred historian, the long series of thirty-seven years which follows, though doubtless not without important occurrences, is passed over in silence, and we are here carried at once to the first month of the fortieth year of these wanderings. Few of those who saw their commencement are now alive; and the few who survive are, one after another, rapidly called away. The first event recorded in this chapter is the death of Miriam. She was a faithful servant of Jehovah; yet having, on a very memorable occasion, been a murmurer (xii. 1.) she was excluded from the privilege of entering Canaan.

Her brothers were in this the partners of her doom; and the occasion of their incurring it is fully recorded in this chapter. The Israelites of this generation, who partook so largely of the rebellious spirit of their fathers, finding at Kadesh no water, like their fathers, on a similar occasion, broke out in loud murmurs against Moses and Aaron. Moses, now as then, laid the case before Jehovah; and now as then, was directed to fetch water for the people from the rock. He did not, however, now as then, follow his instructions with strict fidelity and a becoming spirit. The divine displeasure was therefore

kindled against him, and in punishment of his offence, Jehovah declared that neither himself nor his brother, who, it appears, was equally in the offence, would be permitted to conduct the congregation of Israel into the land of their inheritance. Wherein, then, did the offence of Moses consist? Of this, very different explanations have been given. Perhaps we can best arrive at the truth by looking at the explanation given by Jehovah himself. His charge is, 'ye believed not,' or, (as the original may be rendered,) 'ye were not faithful to me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel.' Of the sanctity of his name, or, in other words, of the reverence due to his various perfections, God is at all times jealous, saying, 'I will be sanctified in them that come nigh unto me, and before all the people I will be glorified.' He was peculiarly so, during the residence of his people in the wilderness, because the great object of the discipline by which he there exercised them, was to raise them above the grovelling conceptions of his character and perfections which they brought along with them from Egypt, and gradually to fit them for the place which he intended them to occupy, as the guardians of his name and worship, in the midst of an idolatrous world. For this they were as yet by no means prepared; for, though the worshippers of Jehovah in name, they were, in sentiment and conduct, half heathens, who had very faint conceptions of his holiness, showed little trust in his promises, and limited the extent of his overruling power and providence, by viewing him rather as their own petty national Deity, than as the omnipotent sovereign of the universe.

Now, in carefully inspecting the narrative of the miracle at the rock of Kadesh, we see much in the conduct of Moses, that was calculated to foster, in his countrymen, these unworthy conceptions of Jehovah, and therefore to counteract the ends of their discipline in the wilderness. Thus, forgetful of the reverence due to the majesty and holiness of Jehovah, he proceeded to the work of performing a miracle in his name, with a bosom agitated with the fires of unholy passion. These he allowed to break forth in vehement reproaches against the people; reproaches which, however just in themselves, were then peculiarly unseasonable; 'Hear now, ye rebels,' &c. From intemperate words, he proceeded to disobedient deeds; for while the command of Jehovah was simply to speak to the rock, that thus a people, prone to stop at second causes, might behold the omnipotence of him who could supply their wants by a word, he, instead of this, spoke not to the rock at all, but smote it—smote it twice; thus leading the spectators to ascribe the miraculous supply which followed, rather to some magical virtue in the rod, than to the will of the Almighty. To crown his guilt, he planted his brother and himself, as it were, in the place of God. 'Must we,' says he, 'fetch you water out of this rock;' we, as if God was nothing, and Moses and Aaron everything, in this work of supernatural power. What peculiarly aggravated the guilt of such conduct was, that Moses and Aaron were the persons to whom God himself had committed the guardianship of his character among their countrymen. Viewing these various circumstances,

then, together, we perhaps account for the sentence passed upon them on this occasion. But whether we do or not is, though not an uninteresting, yet a minor question. The great practical lessons suggested by the memorable occurrence, are fortunately not dependent upon any particular explanation of it. Here we are presented with an awfully impressive illustration of the holiness of Jehovah, to whom sin is so repugnant, that he will not tolerate or connive at it even in the most highly favoured of his servants. Here we have also a striking proof of the weakness of all human virtue, as we behold one who served God so faithfully and so long, falling so far from his steadfastness as to provoke Jehovah to visit his iniquities with stripes, and falling, too, where his chief strength lay. Of the character of Moses, meekness was the distinguishing ornament. Yet his meekness gave place to passion at the water of Meribah. Provoked in spirit, he there 'spoke unadvisedly with his lips,' and was betrayed into conduct which involved him in deep guilt, and brought upon his head a punishment, from which he sought, by repeated supplications, to be released, but sought in vain. Deut. iii. 23, 27. O what an awakening call is this to prayer, to humility, to habitual watchfulness! what a lesson to 'him who thinketh that he standeth to take heed lest he fall.'

PRAYER.

Father of mercies, God of all grace and consolation, vouchsafe thy gracious presence to us, thy guilty and rebellious offspring, while we bewail before thee our manifold sins and transgressions, and implore thy pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. Have mercy upon us, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out our transgressions. It is to thy mercy alone that we can appeal, for we deserve nothing from thy justice, but wrath and tribulation. We are a seed of evil doers; our offences exceed all calculation but thine own; we are daily adding to their number by fresh provocations, in opposition to our own clearest convictions, our most solemn engagements, and thy paternal dealings with us, both by mercies and by trials. We cannot offer one plea in palliation of our offences. Sinners from the womb upwards, we merit the full weight of thy severest displeasure; and whatever destiny thou mayest assign to us, we must acknowledge the justice of thy procedure. Yet we will not despair; for, blessed be thy name, encouraged by thine own gracious promises and invitations, we flee from thy justice, to seek refuge in thy mercy. We flee to lay hold of the rich provisions of grace which thou hast treasured up for sinners in Christ. Pleading the urgency of our wants, and his abundant merits, we entreat thee to look upon us, not as we are in ourselves, but in him thine anointed. For his sake retain not thine anger against us, but spread

over us the broad mantle of thy forgiveness. And, Lord, we would plead not only deliverance from wrath, but admission to favour. To give us a meetness for its enjoyment, O do thou subdue the carnal, disobedient, rebellious spirit within us, and do thou produce in us every holy principle which can lead to devoted and persevering obedience. May we be united by faith to Jesus Christ, the grand centre and depository of spiritual influences; that by grace derived from him, we may triumph over inward corruptions and outward temptations, and walk before thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives. For this, we have, alas, no resources within ourselves, for we are not more guilty than weak, dependent, and helpless. The testimony of thy word, the falls of the most holy of men, our enemies, our temptations, and our daily experience of the workings of a depraved nature within us, all unite in testifying that our own best strength is but weakness; that the power to will and to do must proceed from thee; and that we can stand only when thou upholdest us. A single spark is sufficient to inflame our corruptions. The least temptation overpowers our unstable goodness. And neither past attainments nor present purposes afford us any security against falling into sins, deeply offensive to thee, and dangerous to our own peace and safety. Most merciful Father, do thou then undertake for us. Uphold our goings in thy paths, that our footsteps slip not; and O send us such liberal supplies of the Redeemer's grace, that we may be not only steadfast and immovable, but always abounding in the work which thou hast assigned us; and that, amid all the toils and trials of our Christian warfare, we may be able to combat with ever growing boldness, reposing upon the assurance that we fight with strength not our own, and that we shall come forth more than conquerors through him that loved us. Follow, for this purpose, with thy blessing, the holy lessons, and prayers, and vows of the day that is past. Accept of our grateful thanksgivings for thy goodness to us last night. As thou hast been the protector of our sleeping, be also the guide of our waking hours. Watch over us this day, to hallow our intercourse with each other, and direct us in all our ways. Cause thy blessing to rest upon ourselves, and all whom we ought to remember before thee. And hear us, not according to the imperfections of our requests, but thine own surpassing mercy and grace in Christ Jesus. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXXVIII.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE II. 25—52.

REMARKS.

When the Son of God became man, the glory of his divinity, though veiled, was not entirely concealed. A series of miraculous events connected with his birth and early years, announced him to the devout and inquiring as no ordinary visitant among the dwellings of men. Of these, one is the testimony borne to him upon his presentation in the temple, by two aged and inspired servants of the most High. In that humble babe, whose earthly relatives were so poor, that they could not afford the offering of a lamb, required on such occasions of those who were in easy circumstances; one of these saints, then led by the Spirit of God into the temple, discovered the divinely appointed Saviour of both the Jewish and Gentile world; predicted the nature of his gospel as the grand touchstone of character; described the different effects which it would produce, according to the different dispositions which it met with in different individuals; and, as he held the babe in his arms, felt such a transport of holy joy and delight, that he desired from that moment his dismissal from this world, as if he felt it a kind of profanation to look at or touch ought earthly, after having seen and embraced the long-promised Saviour. The other, actuated by similar emotions, gave utterance to them in expressions of devout 'thanksgivings unto the Lord, and spoke of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Israel.' This was indeed, honour done to him, who, in the lowliness of his condition, presented so little comeliness to attract the eye of the carnal.

On the events of our Saviour's life from this period, till the commencement of his public ministry, the evangelical record is extremely brief; but if brief, it is not un instructive. Among other matters, it bears honourable testimony to the piety of those with whom the Redeemer spent his early years. Joseph and Mary, though poor in earthly condition, were rich in the treasures of heavenly grace; and like all who are so, they cultivated, with studious diligence, the means by which grace is fostered and matured. They dwelt at the distance of seventy miles from Jerusalem, and the road between that city and Nazareth was always difficult, and often dangerous. Yet, in compliance with the divine command, they regularly attended all the great festivals there. Mary, as a female, might have claimed exemption from the arduous duty: but she loved the ordinances of God's house, and was therefore, on these occasions, always the companion of her husband. And when their youthful charge arrived at those years, when, according to Jewish maxims, children ought to come under the yoke of the law, they did not leave him behind. They had respect to the command, 'train up a child in the way wherein he should go;' and they were concerned to obtain for him the blessing of God, in the place where he is peculiarly present, to hear the vows and prayers of his sincere worshippers. Can parents overlook the lesson in

which this holy pair, by their example, instructs them? When they look at the conduct of Joseph and Mary, what can they think of those frivolous excuses from distance, weather and health which they suffer so often to detain them from the house of God? And when they repair to it themselves, how can they justify their neglect of duty, in leaving at home the young, whom God has committed to them, that they may be educated for himself? Even the holy child Jesus was subjected to a course of early training in religion. And he was not above its necessity; for though his divinity was infinite, his human mind was susceptible of successive improvements in knowledge and sanctification. His faithful guardians were therefore carefully conscientious in bestowing it. In the absence of such culture, how can so delicate a plant as religion thrive in the bosoms of ordinary children, when depravity is an innate principle; and the seed sown requires protection against rank weeds which are continually springing up, threatening to mar all future growth and progress? To counteract such unhappy effects, let parents walk in the footsteps of Joseph and Mary.

In the holy child Jesus there is a model here also for children; a perfect model which they cannot too closely copy. For in his early as in his later years, he was holy, harmless, and undefiled. Amply recompensing the labours of love bestowed upon him, 'he advanced in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man.' Of his piety towards God, we have a delightful specimen, in his conduct in the temple. They were his parents indeed that conducted him thither; but he himself gave proofs, that when there, he was in the place of his choice; 'answering and hearing questions,' as one who felt he was at home, in his Father's house, and engaged in his 'Father's business;' and finding such interest in the work, that when his parents, at the conclusion of the festival, set out for their residence at Nazareth, he remained behind to enjoy, for a longer season, the rich festival of the soul which the temple services afforded; nor, while he thus delighted in serving his Father in heaven, did he overlook the claims of his earthly parents. He explained indeed to his mother the paramount claims of heaven. But, in due subordination to them, or rather hallowed and strengthened by their influence, his obedience to his earthly parents was cheerful and constant. As if on a level with themselves in origin, endowments and prospects, he continued 'subject to them' at Nazareth; and, if we may credit the universal testimony of antiquity, laboured along with them in the toils of their lowly vocation; thereby sanctifying poverty, and reflecting honour upon honest and virtuous industry. Here then, is an example for the young! O what blessedness is theirs, who are attracted to follow it. They are happy in themselves; they are a comfort to their parents. The blessing promised to those who seek God early rests upon them; and, trees of righteousness, planted in their season, they bear fruit in their season; not the scanty, sickly and sour fruit which necessarily follows late cultivation, but fruit exhibiting the beauty, the fragrance and ripeness of a successful harvest.

PRAYER.

God of all grace, thou uncreated light and infinite love, we approach thee this evening in the all-prevailing name of the Redeemer; and lifting up our hearts with our hands, would unite in venerating and adoring thy holy name. Who, Lord, can suitably declare thy transcendent excellencies? Who can abundantly, utter the memory of thy great goodness? All of us are living monuments of its surpassing riches. For though continually rebelling against thee, we are mercifully spared; yea, not only spared but indulged, and every day furnished with new proofs of thy parental tenderness and care. Lord, how precious are thy thoughts to usward; how great is the sum of them; if we should count them, they are more than can be numbered. In thee, we behold the author of all our blessings, whether spiritual or temporal; of all that distinguishes us as men, all that elevates us as rational and immortal beings, all that animates us with the hope of being assimilated to thyself as Christians. O may we recognise in all these gifts the giver. From the altar of grateful hearts, may the incense of thanksgiving and praise ascend to thee continually. And may we be as unwearied in our returns of love and obedience, as thou art in expressions of benignity and favour. Lord, we would adore thee, more especially, for the great and glorious salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; salvation meeting all our exigencies as ignorant, guilty, depraved, weak and dying sinners; salvation proposing to us deliverance from eternal wrath, and mansions of everlasting glory in the world of the blessed. We lament that deep depravity of nature, which prompts sinners to make light of blessings so inestimable. We lament, that he, by whom they have been dearly purchased, instead of receiving a glad welcome from all, should, by many, be set up as a butt of contention and contempt. And we lament the extent to which each of ourselves is involved in the guilt of such conduct. Root, we beseech thee, out of our hearts, those unholy propensities in which it originates. O do thou subdue our pride, our self-sufficiency, our love of sin, and our hatred to the holy requirements of Jesus. Penetrate us with durable convictions of our utter destitution without a saving interest in Christ; and give us realizing discoveries of his redeeming grace and love; that, at once impelled by an urgent sense of need, and sweetly constrained by the attractions of sacred affection, we may receive him cordially, cleave to him stedfastly, surrender to him devotedly, all our faculties and

affections, and live to glory in his cross, and show forth his praise. Give us to set him, the Lord, habitually before us; and depending upon the promised aids of his Spirit, to strengthen our weak resolutions, and, resting upon the hope of the future inheritance of his people to animate our languid endeavours, may we daily make progressive advances in our journey Zionward, and persevere, till triumphant over every discouragement, each of us appear there, to behold thine unvailed countenance for ever. Of the brief season allotted for the journey, we behold another day now brought to a close. O forgive our sinful appropriation of so much of it to ourselves, in forgetfulness of thee, and our heavenly calling; and accept of our thanksgivings for its unmerited mercies. We commit ourselves, our dear friends and relatives, and all whom we ought to pray for, to thy fatherly protection during the silent watches of the night. And if it please thee to spare us to behold the light of a new day, may we rise with bodies refreshed, and our minds quickened with renewed zeal and vigour for thy service. Every day that we live, vouchsafe to us grace to make thy will our law, and thy glory our end. And when all our earthly days are ended, and the night of death seals our eyes, may our bodies, united to Christ, sleep in peace till the morning of the resurrection, and our souls, purified from every stain, join the spirits of the blessed in the land of everlasting life and light. Hear us, forgive us, sanctify and save us, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLI.

SCRIPTURE—NUMBERS XXI.

REMARKS.

In the children of Israel in the wilderness, we have a faithful picture of human nature in all ages and countries. The beginning of this chapter presents them in an attitude which challenges our unqualified approbation. Attacked by an active and inveterate enemy, they take prompt measures of defence. Knowing, however, that 'the battle is the Lord's,' they unite to active duty, lowly dependence. They humbly address their vows to the Lord; and when he hears these vows, by granting success to their arms, they, with conscientious promptitude, proceed to pay them. But alas! the shifting quicksand is not more unstable than human goodness. The Israelites having been refused a direct passage to Canaan through the territories of their kinsmen the Edomites, they are obliged to proceed by a difficult and circuitous route. Their souls soon 'become

discouraged because of the way.' And at once forgetful of past deliverances, discontented with present mercies, and unsubdued by the successive judgments which a rebellious spirit brought upon their fathers and themselves, they once more assail Jehovah and his servants with a list of fresh grievances, from which they clamorously demand relief. Obstinate distempers demand the application of vigorous remedies. Such is that which Jehovah administers in the present instance. He sends among them fiery serpents, and these, biting the people in great numbers, a violent inflammation instantly seizes them, and they die in excruciating pain and agony. This alarming scourge produces the intended effect. The Israelites are low in the dust, in penitent confession and supplication; and God, who never afflicts willingly, but even amid deserved wrath remembers mercy, listens to their prayers, and provides a miraculous cure. By his direction, Moses erects a serpent of brass upon the top of a pole, in sight of the people; and all who look at it are instantly and effectually healed.

Judaism has often been called typical Christianity; and here we have an example of the propriety of the designation. For, in the alarming scourge with which the Israelites are here visited, and the miraculous expedient adopted by God for its removal, we have a striking emblematical representation of man's ruin by the fall, and his recovery by Jesus Christ. So Christ himself instructs us, 'As Moses,' says he 'lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life.' John iii. 14. The parallel is indeed remarkable, both as to the evil felt, and the mode of its removal. In regard to the former, we behold, in both cases, disease; that disease the effect of sin; the pain of the disease occasioned by the bite of a serpent; and its end a painful and excruciating death. And in regard to the latter, we behold in both cases, a remedy, appointed by a merciful God; in its nature miraculous; in its operation infallible; accessible to all, and tendered without money and without price. Here, however, the parallel ends. The disease in the one case affected only the body, and death put an end to it. In the other it pervades the soul, and death only widens the field for its never ending ravages. O may we all remember this; for we are all in a state of disease. The fatal poison of sin has insinuated itself into every power and faculty of our natures, and unless extracted, the result is certain, inevitable death. Let us not therefore continue to indulge in the insane folly of cherishing the serpent that stings us: but unfeignedly penitent that we have cherished it so long, and grateful that a thorough and efficacious remedy has been provided, let us direct the eye of faith to the Saviour lifted up on the cross. Let us not despise the remedy. It is the only one, and it is offered to us with the seal and signature of the sovereign Physician stamped upon it. Neither let us delay; for while we delay we die; die the death of the soul, which is cast into hell with the devil, the old serpent. But why should we die, when the means of life are within reach? The remedy, as it is needed by all, is sufficient for all and pressed

upon all. 'Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.'

PRAYER.

On the morning of a new day, marked by a continuation of thy loving kindness toward us, both as individuals and a household, we would seek, Father of mercies, to present to thee, on the family altar, our morning sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise; and with grateful hearts to bless thee, who causest the out-goings of the morning, and the in-comings of the evening, to rejoice over our heads. Lord, how unwearied thy goodness! how numberless the mercies which thou art every hour and moment showering down upon our heads! The rich provider of our temporal necessities, thou art continuing to us health of body and soundness of mind, domestic peace and outward comfort; laying all nature under contribution for our benefit; and making earth and air, fire and water, winds and waves, the ministers of our wills. And thou dost not overlook our spiritual wants. Notwithstanding our sinful abuse of past advantages, we still enjoy thy word, thine ordinances, the ministry of reconciliation, our sabbaths and temples, and the rich promise of thy Holy Spirit, to make these blessed means effectual for our salvation. Truly it becomes us to acknowledge that goodness and mercy have hitherto followed us, and to call upon our souls and all that is within us, to bless and adore thee, the pregnant fountain of all our supplies. Alas! we have each of us cause to rejoice with trembling, for if we have received unnumbered mercies which demand grateful acknowledgment, we have also committed unnumbered offences, which call for penitent confession and humiliation. What good do we possess which we owe not to thee? yet which of all thy gifts that we have not employed as instruments of rebellion against thee? We are indeed a rebellious offspring. Neither kindness nor corrections have the effect of keeping us on the path of obedience. We daily trample upon thine authority; murmur secretly or openly against the dispensations of thy providence, abuse the temporal blessings of our lot, in the indulgence of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; and allow our spiritual opportunities to pass away without showing any corresponding progress, either in the mortification of our sins, or the sanctification of our tempers and lives. We have cause therefore to adore thee for thy long-suffering patience and forbearance towards us, and to rejoice that we have not, as outcasts from thy mercy, been long ago consigned to the abodes of final retri-

bution. O teach us to trace the sins which defile us to their true source, the bitter fountain of a heart which is enmity against thee, and seeks its happiness in things carnal and earthly. And may the humbling conviction, while it abuses our pride, quicken our faith, and endear to us the cross and the grace of the Redeemer. O give us to go to him, that he may sweeten the bitter waters, by the healing virtues of his own blood, and that he may henceforth direct all their streams in a holy and heavenly course. By the power of his grace, do thou elevate our affections and spiritualize our desires, and suffer us no longer to indulge in the folly of seeking rest in this wilderness. May we be taught to make heavenly and spiritual blessings the supreme objects of our solicitude, and to estimate temporal advantages, chiefly as means for conducting us to these; so as in every step of our progress through the wilderness, to have the eye of faith fixed upon the land beyond it. O be thyself, we entreat thee, our pillar of light to guide us by the way. May we never seek to choose for ourselves, but submissively pitch our tent or pursue our journey, as thou directest. If thy goodness indulge us, may we enjoy the comforts of our situation with gratitude and moderation, and see in every blessing that gladdens us thy liberal hand. If thy providence frown upon us, may we neither despise thy chastening, nor faint when we are rebuked, but submit with un murmuring acquiescence to all thine appointments, beholding in every stroke of the rod the hand of love that wields it. In whatever path thou conductest us, O let thine own Spirit guide, thine own arm protect, and thine own love as a covenant God abide with us, and when the discipline of the wilderness is at length brought to a close, do thou conduct us to the joys of the heavenly rest. Grant that our progress this day may bring us a day's journey nearer it, in meetness for its employments and its holy delights. And to thee, in Christ, be ever the praise. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXVI. 7.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE III.

REMARKS.

As eastern monarchs of old were accustomed, in passing from one part of their dominions to another, to send persons to make the roads straight and level before them, and remove all obstructions to their progress, so Jesus Christ, the king of Zion, had also

his forerunner for the discharge of this duty in his behalf. This forerunner was John the Baptist, one, like himself, humble as to worldly condition, but, as we have seen, in the first chapter of this Gospel, pre-eminently distinguished by heavenly honours. These were not bestowed upon him in vain. No sooner did he enter upon his short but brilliant career, than his 'voice crying in the wilderness,' fell like a peal of thunder upon the ears of his slumbering and secure countrymen. All classes of them, far and near, flocked to hear this second Elias; and though the majority knew not the day of their merciful visitation, multitudes, alarmed by his terrific denunciations, in unfeigned sorrow confessed their sins, and submitted to the rite of baptism, in token of their earnest desires after the inward purity which the ordinance represented.

What was then the grand work upon which he insisted, for clearing away the various obstructions calculated to impede the march of the Redeemer. It was repentance—sincere, heartfelt repentance, a duty at all times indispensable for the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom, either in the world or the heart; but more especially called for then, when the hypocritical and sanctimonious profession of the pharisees, on the one hand, and the thinly veiled infidelity of the sadducees, on the other, had well nigh banished all real piety from the land of God's ancient people. John accordingly executed his commission with bold and fearless intrepidity. He indulged in no vague generalities, but assailed the consciences of each class of his hearers with such pointed applications, that none could escape in the crowd. He pressed repentance upon all; he demanded from all fruits worthy of it; and as a decisive test of its sincerity, he insisted upon the total and unqualified renunciation of the besetting sin; the most practical and palpable proof that sin has no longer the mastery within. Ver. 11—14. Acting upon this conviction, his test for the selfish and cold-hearted was beneficence and active charity, for the fraudulent publican, honesty in the collection of the revenue, and for the turbulent and rapacious Roman soldiery, abstinence from violence and false accusations, and contentment with their wages. If John was thus searchingly close in dealing with the consciences of his hearers, he failed not to give weighty reasons for his conduct, and to prove that he was the reverse of an idle alarmist. Ver. 9, 17. Alluding to the desolating judgments which were, through the instrumentality of the Romans, soon to overtake all the impenitent portion of the Jews, he spake 'of the axe as already at the root of the tree,' for destroying both trunk and branches; and of the winnowing 'fan' of the Lord, which would separate the wheat from the chaff, and consign the latter to 'fire unquenchable.' These were terrible appeals; but they came from a heart full of love. While he therefore insisted upon repentance, and testified that no connection with Abraham, in the way of descent and outward privilege, was any ground of security without it, he directed his hearers to Him who could give them repentance; that omnipotent Saviour who could baptize them, not like him, with water, a weak emblem, but with the Holy Ghost, which, penetrat-

ing their hearts like fire, would warm, melt, purify, and refine, and raise them in flames of holy affection and desire to heaven. There is, at no period, saving repentance, except in the experience of these effects of the Redeemer's grace. Applying, therefore, to ourselves all that this faithful servant of God uttered as to its necessity, tests, and obligations, let it be ours, through faith, to apply to him for the heavenly grace. And as the tears of true repentance are found only in the eye of faith, and they flow most freely at the foot of the cross, let us contemplate him crucified, as the grand instrument for producing it in our souls.

Ver. 19. John's faithful ministrations were brought to an abrupt close. His uncompromising boldness in attacking vice in high places, raised the arm of persecuting power against him, and he was shut up in prison. This event was, however, preceded by another, the most memorable in his whole history, his administration of the rite of baptism to the Saviour. This baptism was necessary as the first step in the solemn work of his consecration to the high office, the public functions of which he was then on the eve of commencing. The Jewish priests, under the law, (Exod. xxix. 4.) were washed with water and anointed with oil before entering upon their offices. The great high priest, whom they prefigured, was in like manner washed in the waters of baptism: a rite no sooner administered than, to complete the type, he was anointed with the Holy Ghost, who descended upon him in the shape of a dove, the meet emblem of his own character, miracles, and preaching, as well as of the characteristic graces of his true disciples. This spiritual anointing was, however, more than the mere seal of his commission. It was, besides, a conveyance to him of the qualifications necessary for its discharge; qualification which, as the supreme Jehovah, he at all times in deed possessed, but as man and mediator, were gift derived by him from the parent fountain of divine influences. It is our privilege to know that he received them without measure, and that he received for the purpose of communicating. Let us then continually repair to him, that we may draw out of his inexhaustible fulness; and let us test the reality and success of our applications, by the measure in which we exhibit his own spirit, that spirit whose emblem is the dove. He himself invites our application and we can fully rely upon his power to benefit us. In him we see the well beloved Son of the Father in whom he is always well pleased, and through whom he is well pleased with all who rely upon him for the blessings of salvation. This the Father himself declared, when Jesus was merely baptized with water. O can any withhold belief from the fact when they see him afterwards baptized in his own blood?

PRAYER.

We bless thee, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ, the unspeakable gift of thy love, and rejoice that in him all fulness dwells to meet the necessities of his people; fulness of merit justify their persons, and fulness of grace sanctify their natures. O may it be the pri-

lege of each of us to receive of his fulness, and to present to ourselves and others solid evidences of the fact, in a steady and consistent exhibition of all the diversified graces of his Spirit. May that Spirit take up its habitual residence in our hearts, to perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle us; and may it ever operate there as a holy fire to cleanse, as a sacred light to direct, and as a well of water to refresh, and to spring up in streams of purity and blessedness, unto eternal life. Hasten, we beseech thee, the period of those copious outpourings of the Spirit, which will issue in the glories of the latter days of the church. Look in pity upon the perishing heathen; collect into the true fold the lost sheep of the house of Israel; overthrow the empire of the man of sin; heal the backslidings, and revive the first love of the churches of the reformation. Be more especially gracious to our beloved national Zion. O do thou repair all its breaches; strengthen all its bulwarks; increase the devotedness and add to the numbers of the watchmen upon its walls; prosper all its plans of usefulness, both at home and abroad; and multiply its provisions more and more, under the safeguard of thy protection, and with the securities of a happy national constitution, which recognises thee as the governor among the nations, and Jesus Christ as head over all things to the church. Bless our native country in all its complicated interests, and all who belong to it, from the occupant of the throne to the humblest subject. Do thou diffuse the leaven of pure and undefiled religion through every class of the community, so that the fabric of national prosperity may rest secure upon the basis of national piety; that every habitation of the land may be a Bethel, and all its inmates priests to offer thee spiritual sacrifices. Let thy special blessing rest upon this habitation. May the ties of blood and of mutual dependence which unite us together, be sweetened and hallowed by the bonds of grace, that we may all be followers of thee as dear children, and members of the household of faith, and may at length arrive at our Father's house in heaven. In our progress thither do thou continue to us our comforts, sanctify to us our trials, strengthen us for our duties, and prepare us for every event that is before us. Be with us this night, and give us to retire to our beds with hearts grateful to thee for the unmerited mercies of the past day. Every day whilst we live, be thou our sun to enlighten, and our shield to protect us. And when death calls us hence, may it find us ready for our departure, and ripe for the grace that shall be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Hear,

in heaven thy dwelling-place, these our humble supplications, and forgive and accept of us in Christ Jesus, the Redeemer. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 12.

SCRIPTURE—NUMBERS XXII.

REMARKS.

In the history of Balaam we are furnished with a very striking instance of one who impiously sinned against conscience, and the clearest and most express revelations of Jehovah. His fame as a prophet having reached the king of Moab, on whose territories the Israelites were already encamped on their way to take possession of the promised land, messengers were straightway despatched, bearing the rewards of divination, that they might the more easily induce him to comply with Balak's request, in solemnly devoting the chosen people of God to destruction—a custom which was prevalent in those times, and to which frequent allusions are made in profane writers. The nature of the message was such as ought to have provoked the indignation of any one who pretended to the character of a prophet, and yet, from the courteous reception which the elders of Moab received, it is quite obvious that Balaam was tempted by the bribe, and professed himself ready, after due consultation, to announce whatever the Lord should be pleased to dictate. It is not improbable that, by detaining them over night, he meant to throw an air of mystery over the whole proceeding, that he might the more easily impose on the credulity of his guests. In this, however, he was strikingly defeated by the immediate interposition of God, who, ere he had time to consult, demanded of him concerning the men who were with him. In place, however, of receiving the permission of heaven to engage in a design so foreign to the divine purpose, he is not only strictly prohibited, but a distinct reason is assigned to render the prohibition still more imperative. And well had it been for Balaam had he remembered the strong terms in which the divine injunction had been couched. On a second and more honourable embassy from the king of Moab, however, who tempted him with still higher prospects of worldly aggrandisement, he seems to have been unable any longer to resist complying with their request. The Almighty, who frequently suffers wicked men to be hurried on by their own evil passions, and in this way accomplishes his own wise and holy purposes, at length permitted him to accompany the princes of Moab, though it is obvious, from the marvellous incident which befel him by the way, and which is related from ver. 22. to the end of the chapter, that his conduct at this time was as displeasing to God as it was at variance with the deliberate convictions of his own heart, inasmuch as 'he fell down before the angel of the Lord, and exclaimed, I have sinned; for I knew not

that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.'

In the moral history of Balaam, then, we are presented with a character under a deep sense of God's supremacy, obstinately persisting in the gratification of his own evil passions, and so preferring the wages of unrighteousness to the honours and rewards of true religion. It was not from a mere spirit of recklessness that he pursued the paths of folly and sin, for he was more than once interrupted in these, and solemnly admonished as to the guilt he was deliberately contracting. For a time he seems to have been awed by the divine communications with which he was met, but alas, his hankering after the 'wages of unrighteousness' silenced the warnings from without, and the remonstrances from within, so that he was left to indulge his unhallowed desires, by accompanying the princes of Moab, though he knew this to be in direct opposition to the will of God. Though it is hardly to be expected that any one, in the present day, can be placed in circumstances similar to those of Balaam, yet it is to be feared there are multitudes who act a part as directly opposed to what they know to be the will of God and their own duty. When first tempted to the commission of sin they may, for a time, successfully resist, but when the indulgence of their favourite propensity is concerned, their fear of God and reverence for religion are put aside, and in place of maintaining a consistent profession of faith, in a life of practical obedience, they give occasion to the enemy to blaspheme by the indulgence of their own sinful lusts and passions. Even in the midst of their ungodliness they may meet with many warnings and exhortations that tend to mar their enjoyment, and break in on their fancied happiness. The voice of God's word and of conscience may interrupt them in their way, and compel them to confess their iniquity, and even promise amendment for the future; but their goodness is as the morning cloud and the early dew, which soon pass away; their resolutions are forgotten; their religious convictions are stifled, and they indulge in sin more greedily than before. 'Lord, keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.'

PRAYER.

Almighty, and ever-blessed God, we desire at this time to approach the family altar, and to present before thee our morning's sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Thou art worthy to receive all power, and honour, and glory; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. Impress, we beseech thee, upon our minds, a deep reverence for thy character and perfections, and through faith in the infinite merits of thy Son, and our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, may we be led to recognise and worship thee, as our reconciled God and Father. We give thee thanks for all the mercy and the grace thou hast conferred upon us, since we came into being. Thou art good—thou hast continually done us good, and great is thy faith-

fulness. Thou hast magnified thy love in no sparing thine own Son, but in giving him up to the death for us all, that we, through him, may be delivered from the guilt, and saved from the pollution, of sin. We confess before thee our numerous and highly aggravated iniquities, and acknowledge ourselves utterly unworthy of thy notice and regard. O that we were more deeply impressed with a sense of the evil nature and the ruinous tendency of sin; led to hate it with a perfect hatred, and to cherish a profound sorrow, and a godlier contrition, when betrayed into the commission of it. Look not on us as we are in ourselves, ruined and self-condemned sinners, but regard us through the merits and mediation of the divine Redeemer, who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification; thus being justified by faith, we may have peace with thee our God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Sanctify us through thy truth, thy word is truth, and by thy Holy Spirit may we be led in the way of life everlasting, and enabled to live to the praise and the glory of him who suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. Accept of us, O our God, in our united thanksgivings for the mercies of the last night, and this morning. Let thy presence and blessing accompany us this day. May grace, mercy, and peace, be multiplied on all our fellow men. Bless our friends—forgive our enemies—reward our benefactors. May the lessons of thy word now read, make a deep and permanent impression on our minds. Suffer us not to wall in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners; but may we rather run in the way of thy commandments with enlargement of heart. Hear us when we thus call upon thee for the sake of Jesus Christ, our strength, and our Redeemer. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXXIX. 1.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE IV.

REMARKS.

It is important for believers to know, amid the trials and temptations to which they are exposed, that the Saviour whom they serve was in all points tempted like as they are. Hardly had he entered on his public ministry, when he was beset with reiterated and powerful attacks of the great adversary; thereby showing young converts, and others farther advanced in the Christian life, that, at the very outset of their spiritual career, as well as when about to engage in some higher and holier undertaking, they may anticipate in this, as in other

spects, to be conformed to their heavenly Master. And when we farther bear in mind, that during the whole period of the temptation, Christ as mediator was under the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, and so continued free from every stain of sin, we may learn that his people, though sorely harassed with the unhallowed suggestions of their great enemy, should not give way to despondency, or consider themselves responsible for those evil thoughts which involuntarily intrude on their minds, so long as they continue to resist and strive against them. When a child of God, amid the temptations to which he is exposed, is led to exclaim, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?' he may safely reckon on the sympathy and support of his great high priest, who suffered, being tempted, and who knows how to succour them that are tempted. Nor let any imagine, that because he has been enabled to resist one temptation, and thereby foil the adversary, he will, on that account, be more secure against a future attack. No sooner does the Saviour seem to have gained one triumph, than he was subjected to a second and a third assault; and even when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him only for a season. Thus it ever has been, and ever will be, with the followers of the Lamb. While they continue in this world, they may anticipate a variety of temptations, but it is their privilege to know that the Captain of their salvation has obtained a complete victory over that wicked one who waiteth for their halting; and if like Christ, they only keep steadfastly by the word of God, which is 'the sword of the Spirit,' they shall like him, and by him, come off more than conquerors. While with every temptation there is a way of escape, it would appear, that with every triumph the soul is not only made better, but enabled more successfully to engage in the duties and exercises of its heavenly calling. Thus it is said of Jesus, after passing the fiery ordeal to which he had been exposed, that he returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and having entered into the synagogue on the sabbath-day opened the book of the prophet Isaiah, and having read a portion of its sacred contents began to proclaim the precious and consolatory truths of the gospel, which he had been commissioned and anointed to preach. Often before this had the blessed words of the prophet been read, but never till then could it be said, 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears,' wherein the doctrine of a full and a free salvation is tendered to the poor, by him who is at once the author and the bestower of it. In this tender of the gospel, there is a marvellous accommodation to the varied circumstances of those to whom it is sent. To the spiritually sick it offers the blessing of health—to the captive, it proclaims liberty, and to those who are blind through the ignorance that is in them, it imparts that illumination of heart, by which they are enabled to see and appreciate the wondrous things contained in God's law. All these blessings the gospel offers, and offers them now, the present time being to us, what the jubilee was of old to the Israelites, 'the acceptable year of the Lord.' Sinner! this is your year, your day, your hour. Now, and now only, is

the accepted time, and the day of salvation. While these blessings are freely offered, we must never forget that God asserts his sovereignty in the dispensation of them. The Sidonian widow, and the Syrian leper, the woman who was a sinner, and the thief on the cross, are made the welcome recipients of the saving and sanctifying influences of the truth, while those who have long been plied with the offer of salvation, are left, through their impenitence and unbelief, to perish in their sins, having this, as the ground of their condemnation, 'that they loved the darkness rather than the light, their deeds being evil.' Ver. 28, 29. How true was it, that the devil left Christ only for a season. Though at this time he did not attack him personally, yet, by filling the people with wrath, he stirred them up to put him to death. In this their malicious design, they were defeated; for passing through the midst of them, he went down to Capernaum, and continued on the sabbath-days to teach in their synagogues, casting out devils, and healing as many as were brought to him, sick with divers diseases. His chief delight and great employment, however, seem to have been preaching the kingdom of God, in this way leaving an example to all who are put in trust with the ministry, that they be instant in season, and out of season, making known to their fellow-men the glorious gospel of the grace of God; and beseeching them, by every possible motive, 'to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that they may be saved.'

PRAYER.

Wherewithal shall we come before thee, O Lord, or bow ourselves in thy presence, thou most high God? We will come unto thee in the name of Christ, making mention of his righteousness, and his only. For his sake, may our persons be acceptable in thy sight, and the lifting up of our hands as the incense of old. We confess and bewail before thee the original depravity of our hearts, the ungodliness of our lives, the waywardness of our affections, and the constant tendency we have to yield to the suggestions of the great adversary of our souls, and the allurements of a world lying in wickedness. We mourn over our past sins, and our present unworthiness. We have broken many vows; we have come short of many resolutions, we have misimproved time, and talent, and privilege; and, but for thy mercy and grace might, long ere this, have been given up to judicial blindness, or left to reap the fruit of our own doings in the place of torment. What reason then have we to admire and adore thy long-suffering patience, in that thou art sparing us in the land of the living and the place of hope; that thou art giving us thy word, so full of invitation and promise, and permitting us at all times, and in all circumstances, to address ourselves to thee as the hearer and the answerer of prayer. Glory be to God in the highest, that peace hath been pro-

claimed on earth, and good-will to the sons of men; that the offer of a full and a free salvation hath been made to the guiltiest of us all, through the blood of the cross, and that we are invited, as helpless and miserable sinners, to betake ourselves for pardon, and purity, and eternal life, to him who is able to save to the very uttermost; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for the transgressors. Lord, we would believe, help thou our unbelief. May Christ be formed in our souls the hope of glory, and henceforth through thy Holy Spirit assisting us, may we be enabled to walk as the children of the light, glorifying thee in our bodies and spirits, which are thine. Subdue within us every unholy propensity. Sprinkle us with clean water, that we may be clean; from all our idols, and from all our filthiness, do thou cleanse us. May our lives, henceforth, be hid with Christ in God, so that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we may also appear with him in glory. We would look forward in the exercise of faith and hope, to the coming of our Lord and Saviour, when he shall appear without sin unto salvation; when they that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth to share in the splendours of his triumph, and so be for ever with the Lord. Our hearts' desire and prayer for all men are, that they may be saved. Let pure and undefiled religion prosper and prevail. Pity and supply the wants of the poor. Spare the lives of the young and the useful. Prepare the dying for death, and teach the living to live humble and mindful of their latter end. We give thee thanks for thy Fatherly care and kindness this day. May we lie down in thy fear, and rise rejoicing in thy favour. Visit our friends with thy salvation—our enemies with thy forgiveness—our benefactors with thy beneficence. And unto thee, the Father, the Son, and the ever-blessed Spirit, one God, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVI. 8.

SCRIPTURE—NUMBERS XXIII.

REMARKS.

The truth of the psalmist's statement, 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain,' was strikingly illustrated in the experience of Balaam. He had, contrary to many intimations on God's part, gone with the princes of Moab to curse the armies of Israel, for although he declared he 'could not go beyond the

word of the Lord his God, to do less or more,' there can be little doubt, that influenced as he was by the 'wages of unrighteousness,' he was quite prepared, but for the restraining power of God, to have acted in accordance with Balak's wishes. 'The Lord thy God,' says Moses, 'would not hearken unto Balaam, but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee.' Two of these blessings are contained in this chapter; the one from the 7th to the 10th verse: the other from the 18th to the 24th verse: both of them expressed in language highly poetical, and eminently calculated to impress any ordinary reader with the precious privileges which Israel, as the chosen people of God, enjoyed, and to lead them to join in the prayer of Balaam, 'let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.'

In regard to Balaam, it is to be feared that this prayer was never answered; for we find him, after leaving Balak, returning by the way of Midian, and instigating the princes of the land to seduce the Israelites into idolatry, by a stratagem which, unhappily for all concerned, too soon succeeded. That God might avenge himself for the wrongs which his people had sustained, Moses was afterwards commissioned to go forth to battle against the Midianites, whom he routed with a great slaughter, and also 'slew Balaam the son of Beor with the sword.' Unhappy Balaam, with all thy knowledge of God, and with thy strongly expressed wish to die the death of the righteous, yet unwilling to lead their life, thou wast ultimately left to perish as one of the enemies of God's people. It is melancholy to reflect, that this wilful apostacy of Balaam was after experiencing some signal manifestations of the divine presence and power, and bearing honourable testimony to the value of a religious life as the best preparation for a peaceful death. Reader, it is a sad miscalculation indeed, when the arithmetic of time exceeds that of eternity, and when man is so far abandoned by God as deliberately to choose those very paths which lead down to the chambers of death. Having taken one fatal step, he is urged on to a second and a third, to conceal, it may be, his iniquity, till at length, through a growing hardness of heart, the never-failing attendant of an ungodly life, he not only places himself beyond the reach of recovery, but actually sinks into a state of hopeless and irremediable ruin. 'Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone.' 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.' 'I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper.'

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, we desire to worship thee as the King of kings, and Lord of lords, as dwelling in that light which is inaccessible and full of glory. Heaven is thy throne, and the earth is thy footstool. Thou art here and every where present beholding the evil and the good. Thou compasses our path and our lying down, and art intimately acquainted with all our ways. Thou understandest the thoughts of our hearts afar off. We are but of yesterday—we all do fade as a leaf,

and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away; but thou art the self-existent—the immutable—the eternal Jehovah, glorious in holiness, farful in praises, doing wonders. Thou didst at first make man upright; but alas, he soon sought out many inventions, and by adding sin unto sin, we have rendered ourselves obnoxious to thy displeasure, and are unworthy of thy notice and regard. We have nothing of our own to plead in extenuation of our guilt, for, in our best services we offend and come short of thy glory; but we would plead the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain to take away the sin of the world. We would rest by faith on the merits of that perfect sacrifice which Christ offered up once for all, that he might make an atonement for a world living in wickedness, and bring in an everlasting righteousness for the justification of all who believe. Lord enable us henceforth to look to Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith. May the same mind be in us that was in him, who ever esteemed it as his meat and drink to do the will of his Father in heaven. And seeing it is not in man who walketh to direct his steps, we pray for the aid and direction of the Holy Spirit, that we may be led in the way of all truth, and enabled to consecrate ourselves as living sacrifices unto God, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service. May we be freed dying daily unto sin, and living unto righteousness; and from a deep sense of the many and invaluable privileges with which we are favoured, may we strive to approve ourselves the faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus, by walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. Forbid that we should be among the number of those who know the truth, but who in practice deny it. Having named the name of Christ, may we be careful to depart from all iniquity, and live in strict conformity with the requirements of the gospel, and the example of Christ. We bless thee for all thy goodness and grace—for the mercies of the past night, and the enjoyments of this morning. We adore thy protection and blessing this day. Let thy Son's kingdom come, and let thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven. Regard, O thy mercy, our friends and all whom we hold dear. Comfort and sustain the sick and the dying, and grant that we may lead the lives of the righteous, that at last our death may be like theirs, and all we ask is in the name, and for the sake, of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXX. 3.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE V.

REMARKS.

No one, we think, can read the marvellous account here given of the draught of fishes, without recalling a similar incident which the Evangelist John relates, in his xxi. chapter, as having taken place in the same sea, and in presence of the same apostles, shortly after the resurrection of Christ. The first incident, which was preparatory to their becoming 'fishers of men,' has not improperly been regarded as indicating the nature of that success with which their preaching was to be attended, when multitudes would be induced to make a profession of faith, many of whom would ultimately fall away; whereas the second incident becomes descriptive of those who were true believers, and who, as such, would persevere unto the end. The former are prefigured by their indefinite number, and the breaking of the net; the latter by the definiteness of their number, 'an hundred and fifty and three,' their quality, and their being all found on the right side of the ship, where the net, which remained entire, had, by the special instruction of Christ, been cast. When Peter and the other disciples who were with him, compared these two incidents, they could not fail to perceive, that whilst by the former they were called to be the followers of Jesus, and as such to aid him in the prosecution of the great work on which he had been sent, by the latter they were more specially commissioned to go forth as the heralds of the cross, and to proclaim the unsearchable riches of divine grace, that sinners might be brought unto Christ, and, as the flock of his pasture, may receive those spiritual supplies by which the divine life is maintained in the soul. And in as far as the ministers of the New Testament, of the present day, are actuated by the feeling of Peter, when he exclaimed, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,' or by the zeal which he displayed when he, with James and John, forsook all and followed him, then may they expect to be blessed with some measure of the same success in winning souls to the Saviour, and so adding unto the church of those who shall be saved.

Ver. 12. In the healing of the leper, as well as in the cure of the man taken with the palsy, we are furnished with two very affecting instances of the power and compassion of Christ, in doing good to the bodies and souls of men, and the authority with which as Mediator he was invested to forgive sin. In both instances there was an exhibition of faith which was honouring to the Saviour, while both seem to have been accompanied with the same blessed results. Previous to his birth it was foretold that he would be called Jesus, because he was 'to save his people from their sins,' and now, though exalted at God's right hand, it is still in the capacity of 'a Prince and a Saviour.' In heaven he continues to exercise his regal and priestly offices, and whilst all events are under his control, he delights to see the sinner, in the exercise of humility and faith, crying out, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.' The prayer which he

thus, by his own Spirit, prompts us to utter, he will, by the same Spirit, graciously answer. He who said to the leper, 'I will, be thou clean,' and to the paralytic, 'thy sins are forgiven thee,' is still able, with a word, to cure the most inveterate disease, and as willing as he ever was, to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through him. Whatever, then, O sinner, be the nature of your malady—whether you are borne down with bodily infirmity, or harassed with a sense of your manifold and aggravated transgressions, do not give way to murmuring or despair. Remember there is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there; that it is the prerogative and promise of Zion's king, to save, and that in this capacity he now with equal authority and grace, proclaims to the guiltiest of the human race the offer of pardon, and purity, and eternal life. O sinner, with such a precious offer from so glorious, and withal, so condescending a Saviour, why will ye die? Rather, like Matthew, leave all and follow Christ. The first invitation he received was straightway accepted. How many offers have you slighted? How many calls have you rejected? Once more Christ has addressed you in these words, 'follow me.' See that ye refuse not him who now speaketh to you from heaven, but let your prayer be, 'Lord, draw me, and I will run after thee; save me, and I shall be saved.'

PRAYER.

O Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and in him God of all grace and glory, we would again approach the footstool of thy throne, and address ourselves unto thee as unto the hearer and answerer of prayer. We kneel before thee as guilty and polluted sinners, unable to stand the scrutiny of thy law, or to offer any thing like a ransom for the sin of our souls. We have been blessed with talents, but we have abused them, and with high spiritual privileges, but we have misimproved them. Our time has been too much occupied with the pursuits and the vanities of the world, whilst we have been little mindful of the value of the soul, and the realities of eternity. The dispensations of thy providence have often been of a nature well fitted to lead us to a devout recognition of thy supremacy, and of our own dependence upon thee, whilst the blessings of thy grace have been as eminently calculated to awaken our love and gratitude, and to induce us to live no longer to ourselves, but to him who loved us, and gave himself for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. We have been unprofitable servants, and worse than unprofitable, and do therefore stand justly exposed to thy righteous indignation. But we cast ourselves on thy mercy and grace in Christ Jesus, humbly beseeching thee, for his sake, to be merciful to our unrighteousness, and to remember against us our ini-

quities no more for ever. Rebuke us not in thy wrath; chasten us not in thy hot displeasure. Speak peace unto our souls, by giving us the well grounded hope and the comfortable persuasion of being justified freely by thy grace. May we know, in our blessed experience, what it is to have passed from death unto life, and may we be enabled to give evidence of the reality of our faith, by maintaining a conduct and conversation such as becometh the gospel. Through thy Holy Spirit, as the comforter and sanctifier of the church, may we be built up in faith and holiness unto salvation. May sin no longer have dominion over us, but being renewed in the spirit of our mind, may our affections be set on those things which are above, that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we may be found in peace, without spot and blameless, interested in his righteousness, and adorned with the gifts and graces of his Spirit, and made welcome to enter on that rest which remaineth for the people of God. We give thee thanks for all thy past care and kindness. Thou hast hitherto dealt mercifully with us in protecting us amid danger; in supporting us under trial; in comforting us in sorrow; in preserving us amid many temptations; and in sustaining our souls, by the consolations of thy word and Spirit, amid the severest bereavements with which thou hast been pleased to visit us. But whilst we would bless and magnify thy fatherly and affectionate providence, we would ever contemplate and adore, with devout gratitude and holy admiration, the riches of thy grace, as these have been made manifest through the blood of the cross. O that we were led to feel more powerfully the constraining influence of Christ's love, and enabled to live still more devoted to his cause and service. Let the knowledge of Christ and him crucified be imparted to all who are still dead in trespasses and sins. May the sick experience thy peculiar care, and may the dying depart in peace, their eyes having seen thy salvation. May we never forget that we are mortal creatures, because we are sinners, and through faith in the merits of our Redeemer may we be led to exclaim, O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory! Watch over us this night. Raise us to the duties and enjoyments of a new day. May our time here be spent in thy fear and service, and at last may we dwell in thy house above, for ever and ever. And all we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII.

SCRIPTURE—NUMBERS XXIV.

REMARKS.

God permitted Balaam to go with Balak, but forbade him to curse Israel. But still the resolution to obtain the bribe and to curse the Israelites remained; else why did he go with Balak? and, though compelled to bless Israel, yet so strong were his avarice and ambition, that it was not from the heart, because he ultimately counselled Balak to entice them, in the matter of Peor, to sin most wickedly and presumptuously against the Lord. But although he was false to God and deceitful to Balak, yet the Lord made him the instrument of his Spirit, in the prophecy which he uttered. This was a very remarkable prophecy, by the utterance of which, in the hearing of the king and princes of Moab and Midian, he published to the nations of the east, the coming of one out of Jacob who was to have dominion and power. By taking up his parable, which means his speaking aloud, he shows that the same Spirit who made the dumb ass speak, could make the avaricious mind, and the false lips of Balaam, foretell prosperity and future renown to Israel. The Spirit of God came upon him. He saw the vision of the Almighty, who had lately appeared to him by an angel, and his mind was so full of that which God revealed to him, that he could see nothing else. Being not now blind, as when the ass reproved him, or as when he was intent on cursing Israel for hire, he becomes loud in their praises, saying, 'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel.' He compares them to gardens by the river side, to cedars beside the waters. He predicts that the seed of Israel shall be on many waters, that his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. He here foretells the future temporal and spiritual prosperity of Jacob; the triumphs of the kings of Israel, especially David and Solomon, over all their enemies, and, finally, the glory of his kingdom who has ascended up on high, leading captivity captive. He declares his knowledge of the true God in these words, ver. 16, 17. 'I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh.' He means that a vision pointed out to him the ways of God in future ages, and hence it is also said, 'There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel.' This is said to refer also to the future triumphs of Israel, but especially of the kingdom of the Messiah, of whom it is recorded, Psal. lxxii. 8. 'He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the end of the earth.'

Thus we see the power of God's Spirit over the mind of this prophet, for, although he at first approached God by such rites and ceremonies as were hateful to him, yet he now obeys the dictates of the Holy Spirit of God. He did not now look to the seven altars, the seven bullocks, and the seven rams; but he turned away from them, and looking towards the wilderness, he saw Israel abiding in his tents, and the Spirit of God came upon him. Under the power of this Spirit he was not permitted to muse in silence,

but to proclaim aloud, to the dismay of the king and the princes of Moab, the wonderful counsels of the God of Israel. Here the slave of worldly ambition, the minister of enchantments and divination is, amidst his deceitfulness, made to minister to the purposes of the true God. This prophecy might be useful, not only to the Israelites, but to the surrounding nations, because every new victory, every new accession of power and territory to the Israelites, would in part verify the prophecy, would inspire them with new confidence in God, and fidelity in his service, and would show even the idolatrous nations, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and that he alone should be worshipped, by all nations, in spirit and in truth.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, who art the living and the true God. Thou art eternal in thine existence, infinite in all thine attributes and perfections, righteous in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works. Although many nations are still in darkness, and dwell in the land of the shadow of death, yet ever blessed be God that the great light hath visited us. Thou who didst speak unto the fathers by the prophets, hast spoken unto us by thy Son from heaven. We would hail with pious gratitude, the appearance, in our day, of the Star out of Jacob, and rejoice exceedingly because we are gladdened by the light of the Sun of righteousness. We give thee the praise, because we see and hear what many prophets and righteous men desired to see, but were not permitted. Glory be unto God in the highest, for peace on earth and good-will to men. But what are we, O Lord, that we should be so highly favoured? Like Israel of old, we are by nature covenant breakers, and, notwithstanding our peculiar privileges, we have too often been unprofitable servants. Thy name we have not duly revered, thy pure and holy laws we have broken, thy sabbaths we have not duly hallowed, thine altars and thine ordinances we have too often forsaken, and we are verily guilty in thy sight. Amidst the cares of the world, we have too often forgotten thee, the God that made us, and lightly esteemed the rock of our salvation. Whilst enjoying thy bounty we have been ungrateful children; under thy threatenings and chastisements we have not been humbled, and have not diligently improved the dispensations of thy providence. The heart is deceitful; wo is unto us, for we have sinned. Enter not into judgment with us, O our God, but see our shield; look upon us in the face of thine anointed Son. Ever blessed be thy name, because there is mercy with thee that thou mayest be feared, and plenteous redemption that thou mayest be sought after. Blessed be God for his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on

him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Evermore, O God, give us this faith and this life. Open our eyes that we may behold the riches of thy mercy and the wonders of thy law. Give us an interest in the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, and give us the spirit of true repentance for all past sins. Let not sin henceforth obtain dominion over us, but restore to us the joys of thy salvation, and uphold us by thy free Spirit. Notwithstanding our unworthiness, thou hast opened our eyes, in favourable circumstances, to rejoice in the light of a new day. Thou art this morning covering our table with the bounties of thy providence, for which our hearts would praise the Lord. Give us, we earnestly beseech thee, a rich portion of that bread and water of life which came down from heaven, that our souls may never hunger and never thirst. Let a deep conviction of thy presence go with us, this day, into the society of men, that when we engage in the ordinary duties of life, we may ever be mindful of our duty to our God. Let our thoughts and desires be pure, our words true, our actions just, and by thy Spirit enable us to have consciences void of offence towards God and man, and unto thy name be all the praise. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXV. (*Second Version.*)

SCRIPTURE—LUKE VI. 1—26.

REMARKS.

We are here told, that, on the sabbath after the second day of the passover, when the disciples plucked the ears of corn and did eat them, certain of the pharisees said unto them, 'why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days?' This accusation was in reality made against Jesus himself, but he repels it by a reference to David, who, although a prophet as well as a king, when pressed by hunger, partook of the shew-bread, and with the consent of the high priest himself, which was contrary to the law. He refers also, in vindication of himself, to the priests, who killed the sacrifices on the sabbath day; and to a passage in Hosea, where God is said to prefer mercy to sacrifice. These were acknowledged facts, and yet were never challenged by a single self-righteous pharisee. See remarks on Mat. xii. 1—21. He administered to the pharisees a reproof, which so enraged them, that they counselled how they might put him to death. Nevertheless, he was continually doing good to the souls and bodies of men, by instructing the ignorant, reclaiming the wicked, by casting out unclean spirits, and by healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases, and even the deadly maladies of the soul. In this chapter he delivers a sermon, for these

purposes, which is a different one from that which is recorded in the fifth chapter, and downwards, of Matthew. In addressing his disciples, in this chapter, he said, blessed are ye who are poor, meek, modest, and humble; who can cheerfully part with temporal wealth, riches, power, and honour, when called to do so, in the cause of true religion, and in the service of the true God. To such he says, wicked men, whose fathers persecuted the prophets, may load you with reproaches and curses, may exclude you from society, and say and do all manner of evil against you falsely, and persecute you, even to the death, for my sake; but rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.

This passage should teach all, in their religious duties, to remember that God knows their thoughts and that, if they are not sincere, he will not accept of them. Woes are here uttered against those who go with the hypocrisy of the pharisees in their hearts, to the house of God; and, it may be, to the table of communion, as if God would sanctify by his Spirit what his word condemns. If we would avoid this hypocrisy, our repentance must be sincere, our watchfulness and prayer constant and fervent, and in all our trials we must, with Christian fortitude, follow the example of our blessed Lord, who had no where to lay his head.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art our God, and we will praise thee; our fathers' God, and we will exalt thy name together. Thou didst breathe into us the breath of life, and we became living creatures; thy spirit of the Almighty has given us understanding; thy good providence has hitherto protected us, and thy bounty has supplied our wants. Thou hast saved us from the pestilence that walked in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. Unto thee we have all our days been indebted for the blessings of health, friendship, and society; and for the rich spiritual consolations which have soothed our souls in the seasons of sorrow and affliction; but above all for Jesus Christ, thy best gift to men. When we meet together in his name, in the family, or the sanctuary, teach us humility and self-abasement; and teach us to worship thee, our God, in reverence and godly fear. O Lord God of truth, deliver us from all formality and hypocrisy, worldly corruption, and self-righteous presumption, and teach us to seek for acceptance with God only through the merits of Christ. When we read a portion of his word, O Lord, let the light of his Spirit shine into our understandings, to direct our meditations, and to enlarge our desires after heartfelt communion with God. May his word ever be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. May it be in our comfortable experience the good seed in a good soil, always growing luxuriant and beautiful and increasing in the peaceable fruits of right

ousness, which are, through Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God. Let not our goodness be as the early cloud, and the morning dew, that passeth away; but let our path be the path of the just, that shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Give us the truths of thy word, in the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, that they may lay open the deceitfulness of the heart, and minister to our edification and improvement; but above all, may lead our souls habitually unto God, the fountain of mercy, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. O God, let not the vain glories of this world withdraw our affections from the excellence of heavenly wisdom, and the holiness of thy perfections and laws. Let not the temptations of the devil, and the wicked example of the world, entice us to seek after sinful gratifications, and to say, Peace, while there is no peace. Let not the trials and afflictions of this life overcome our patience and resignation to the will of God; but teach us to say, with thy people of old, We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. In our intercourse with one another, teach us, O God, to love one another, as God, for Christ's sake, hath loved us. Teach us mutually, and as thy children, to cherish and practise meekness and patience, brotherly-kindness, forbearance and charity, that we may live together in unity, and may, by the grace of God, depart from all manner of iniquity. With grateful hearts for all thy goodness to us individually, and as a family, we would this evening, commend ourselves to the protection of the God of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps. May thy kingdom come, O God, and thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven, and let all praise and glory be universally ascribed unto God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRaise—PSALM LXL.

SCRIPTURE—DEUTERONOMY IV.

REMARKS.

Man's happiness consists in knowing the will of God, and in the enjoyment of his favour. All his laws are the dictates of heavenly wisdom and goodness; they all proclaim his excellence and glory, and when devoutly obeyed, they promote the temporal and eternal welfare of man. For these purposes they are given us by the Father of our spirits, who has adapted them to our nature, character, and condition. To Israel he gave his commandments, his

statutes, and righteous judgments. He entered into covenant with these Israelites, gave them laws, and exhorted to obedience by many promises, but punished the disobedient by the heaviest judgments. The blessings which he conferred were tokens of his goodness; his power was manifested in their deliverance, and his holiness and justice in rewarding the righteous, and punishing the wicked. By his laws and ordinances, recorded in the Scriptures, we learn his holy will, and his merciful concern for our happiness. By his solemn warnings he sets before us our danger, if we transgress, and by promising mercy to the penitent and returning prodigal, he encourages to repentance and amendment. When Israel obeyed his laws, which he gave them by his prophet Moses, he blessed them; but when they murmured against Moses, and rebelled against God, and bowed down to idols, then the Lord withdrew his favour and protection, and gave them over to the sword and to the pestilence. How often did they forget the God that made them, and lightly esteem the rock of their salvation! They forgot their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, the wonders of God at the Red sea, and mount Sinai, and the pillars of cloud and fire. The miracles in the wilderness, and the passage of the Jordan, were all, in times of temptation and trial, forgotten, and they rebelled against God.

These things have been recorded for our warning and edification. He who spoke in times past by the prophets, has, in the fulness of time, spoken unto us by his Son from heaven. The Messiah has not come in the fire and in the cloud, or by the awful solemnities of mount Sinai, but by his word and Spirit, by his pure precepts, holy life, astonishing miracles, and meritorious death, he has come, bringing salvation, and mighty to save. Let us, therefore, be earnest at the throne of grace, by prayers and supplications, that we may find mercy to pardon, and grace to help us in the time of need. If he, who despised the law of Moses, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing; and done despite unto the Spirit of grace. To obey his commandments and ordinances, is, at all times, the duty and the interest of all. Obedience, proceeding from a true faith, is the only test of discipleship. Obedience to God's laws is, moreover, the only sure pillar of society; for where the institutions of a nation, and the characters of a people, are at variance with the commands and ordinances of the Bible, that nation cannot stand. Where there is not the fear and worship of God, there are no true charity, justice, and mercy. Where the holy influences of the Spirit of God do not implant and direct the pious affections, that man's religion is but a vision. Like the morning cloud and early dew, it passeth away. Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. It was said of old by Joshua, xxiv. 15. 'And if it seem evil unto you, to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' Happy would that nation have been, had they always followed this advice and determination. Happy is that family in

whose hearts the fear of God prevails, and who meditate daily upon his word and obey it. Happy are the young, whose tender minds glow with piety to God, and who are taught to know their Creator and Redeemer in the days of their youth. And thrice blessed is that people whose faith in Christ works by love, and purifies the heart, and overcomes the world.

PRAYER.

Teach us, O Lord, to lift up our souls with our voices, unto thee this morning, in heartfelt gratitude and praise, for thine unmerited and unceasing goodness. When we meet together in thy service, and approach thy pure and holy presence, may we never forget our own unworthiness, but join trembling with our mirth. Thou hast long preserved us as a family, and hast enriched our hearts with many blessings. Thou hast, in thy good providence, caused the outgoings of the evenings and the mornings to rejoice over us. By thy watchful care and bounty, thou hast preserved us during the past night, and hast invigorated the body with health and sleep, and inspired our souls with hope and trust in thee. Thou art day by day filling our mouths with food, and our hearts with gladness, confirming to us the gracious promise that our bread shall be given us, and our water shall be made sure. Around the family altar, we would this morning join in songs of thanksgiving and praise unto our God, for the peaceful repose of the past night, and for the mercies of the morning. Forbid, O our God, that we should be satisfied with the mere outward service of reading, meditation, and praise; but teach us, by thy Spirit, to offer unto thee the sacrifice of sincere and penitent hearts. In mercy deliver us, O Lord, from all hypocrisy and deceit in our religious duties, and from all falsehood and injustice in our worldly dealings. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from us, with all malice. Save us from the deliberate omission of any duty, or the transgression of any law. Let our eyes this day be turned away from beholding vanity, and teach us to set a guard upon our thoughts, words, and actions, lest we grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. Command thy light and truth to shine into our hearts, that we may behold the wonders of thy law, and run in the ways of thy commandments. Let our prayers, which we humbly offer in the name, and through the merits of Christ, ascend unto God with acceptance, like the incense of the evening and morning sacrifice. Look not upon us as we are in nature and life, sinful and condemned; but

see, O God, our shield, look upon us in the face of Jesus, thine anointed Son. By the merciful covenant, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; O Lord give us an interest, now and for ever, in his all-prevailing intercession, and in the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. We are not our own, but bought with a price, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the blood of Christ; teach us then, O God, not to live any longer unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again. We would embrace in our prayers, O thou Father of all, our brethren of mankind. May the Redeemer of the kingdom soon comprehend all the nations on the face of the earth. Open the eyes of this ancient people, that they may see their Messiah in our blessed Lord and Saviour. May thefulness of the Gentiles soon be the subjects of the kingdom of Christ. May Romish superstition soon be removed, and may the glorious light and liberty of the gospel soon gladden every nation from the rising to the setting sun. Say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back, bring thy sons from afar, and thy daughters from the end of the earth. May we all grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: to whom, with thee, at the ever-blessed Spirit, be glory, both now and ever. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXII.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE VI. 27—49.

REMARKS.

Our Lord here addresses himself to all who were at that time, and are now, willing to hear. His doctrine is that of mutual love and brotherly kindness. These were bright ornaments in his own character, and also distinguish the characters of all who bear his name and image. He came not only to save his chosen people from their sins, but to give peace on earth and good-will to men. For this purpose he illustrates, by very impressive examples, the law of Christian love, forbearance, and charity. It is, without doubt, a difficult duty to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to bear the angry insults of him that smiteth us, and to allow him that taketh away our property to do so with impunity. But it is the law of the gospel that we regard all these things as subordinate to the law of brotherly love, and the peace of society. That we rather suffer a small injury than, by furiously resenting it, provoke greater. That we may thus, by our self-denial and forbearance, bring the offending party to a sense of his guilt, and, by kindly remonstrance, make him

ashamed of the past, and bind him in future by this very law of love, justice, and charity, which his avarice and unruly passions had broken. Thus the wise master reclaims the servant, the parent the child, the man in authority the whole community, and thus our blessed Lord subdued his enemies. And were this Christian rule to operate through the wide range of human society, the very disposition to enmity, to inflict personal injury, to steal, and to traduce the character, would be eradicated, and the golden rule, the heavenly disposition of doing to others as we would wish them to do to us, would universally prevail. The true disciples of Christ have here no dispensing power in this matter. By vowing to be his they have bound themselves by this rule, they have sworn to obey it as the law of their lives, for this is the test of their discipleship, that they love one another, and even their enemies, and that they mutually forgive one another, as their common Father, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven them. Hence the people of God pray for their enemies as Christ prayed for his. Their desire is, like their Master who went about continually doing good, to do good to all men, and in all circumstances. They no doubt love, with pure affection and unshaken confidence, those that are of the household of faith, but they extend their prayers and their alms even to their persecutors. They do not regulate their deeds of charity by the expectation of an equivalent return, but lend, hoping for nothing again. Thus they are the ministers of God's bounty, which they use, in part, for the good of their poorer brethren, and even for their enemies, whose hearts they melt by heaping coals of fire upon their heads. Thus they imitate the love of God, who is no respecter of persons, but who causes his sun to shine on the evil and the good, who sendeth rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, to all the inhabitants of the globe, and who sends, by his Son and his Holy Spirit, the blessings of mercy and salvation. God promises thus to bless his people, by mercifully judging those who are candid, charitable, and merciful in judging others, because they thus illustrate the law of charity and mercy, which is the fruit of Christ's purchase, and the ornament of the covenant of grace. It is not because these graces of themselves deserve or merit the mercy of God, but, being the fruit of his Holy Spirit, they have the promised reward.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we would ever count it as our highest honour and our chief happiness that we have access at all times to thy blessed presence. Although thou art far exalted above all principalities and powers, yet thou condescendest to regard us in compassion and mercy. What are we, O Lord, that thou shouldst be so very good and gracious unto us. Although thou didst create us innocent and happy, yet we soon forfeited these blessings, and even life itself, by sinning in Adam. The gold soon became dim, the fine gold was changed, and man, being in honour, did not abide. Our nature soon became

corrupted, we forfeited innocence and peace, were banished from thy blessed presence, and have incurred thy righteous sentence of condemnation and death. Wo is unto us, for we have sinned. But, O Lord, we would for ever celebrate thy mercy, because thou didst look in compassion on our fallen and sinful state, and in the fulness of time didst send the promised Deliverer. We would, in time and through eternity, celebrate thy praises, who so loved the world as to send thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. O give us an interest, now and for ever, in all that he hath done, and taught, and suffered for the honour of thy name and laws, for the prosperity of his church, and the eternal salvation of his people. We bear his name by baptism, God grant that we may breathe his Spirit, and bear his image in true piety to God, in benevolence and charity to men, and keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. We are by nature ignorant; enlighten us, O Lord, by thy holy word. We are sinful and corrupted in heart and life; O Lord, purify us by the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Teach us to see the guilt and danger of sin, to mourn over past sins, as one that is in bitterness for a first-born and an only child; and in future help us, O God, to depart from all manner of iniquity, in thought, word, and deed. In youth and in age, in prosperity or adversity, may we remember thee, our God, and contentedly submit to thy holy will. Teach us to look to him who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. In the time of sorrow and affliction, lead our thoughts to him who was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and when worldly misfortunes befall us, may we, with submission to thy holy will, look to him who had not where to lay his head. Under family bereavements, teach us to say, with pious resignation, The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, and blessed be the name of the Lord; and to seek hope, consolation, and fortitude from him who is the resurrection and the life. Teach us to know that thou causest all things to work together for the good of them that love thee, and are the called according to thy purpose. May love for our ever blessed Redeemer ever glow in our hearts, and may we ever cherish reverence for his authority, and dutiful obedience to his laws and ordinances. May we be all of one mind in his service, by treasuring up his precepts in our hearts, by believing his doctrines to the salvation of our souls, and by living habitually

under the influence of one faith, one hope, and one baptism. May we ever cause our light so to shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven; and may we at last obtain the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

THIRTEENTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI. 8.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XXXVIII.

REMARKS.

This is entitled 'a Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance,' and we at once perceive what it was that he sought to recall to his memory—it was sin. We shall do well to imitate his example, and to remember our faults before God this day, taking the same views of sin as David did, and cherishing the same feelings regarding it. Let us look to our sins in their number; and if we but select a single year, or month, or week, or day of our past life, and compare what we did with what we might have done, and what we were with what we ought to have been, we shall discover sins of omission and commission, sins personal and relative, sins of deed, word, thought, feeling, aim, and motive, beyond computation or even conception. And if we can bear to take a steady view of the iniquities of our whole life-time, up to this moment, we shall perceive, with David, that they are 'gone over our head,' like swelling waves that threaten to overwhelm us, or like stupendous mountains of guilt that pierce the clouds of heaven as if calling for vengeance, and then seem ready to fall upon us, to crush us to destruction. Let us look to our sins in the grievous effects they have already produced on our present well-being. Have they not excited the 'wrath' of almighty God, and kindled against us his 'hot displeasure?' and brought upon us numerous calamities in mind, body, estate, and relations? Still in all this we may hear the voice of a sin-avenging God, saying, 'Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou didst forsake the Lord?' These things are part of the appointed and appropriate 'wages of iniquity.' And yet are they to the impenitent but the 'beginnings of sorrows,' and therefore let us, with David, most of all think of our sins in the guilt which they affix to our characters, and the consequent gloom they spread over our future prospects.

Yet, blessed be God, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. The Being against whom we have sinned makes himself known in the gospel, as the 'God of salvation' in whom we may trust, yea, is exhibited to believers as a God in covenant, whom they may humbly claim as their own. Realizing his character, let us be encouraged to seek his face. Knowing that he waits to be gracious, let us 'declare

our iniquity' with ingenuous confession, and be 'sorry for our sin' with bitter compunction of heart. Let us meekly submit ourselves unto God, under those afflictions which sin has brought upon us. Convinced that he is justified in all that he inflicts, that whatever be the instruments of our punishment, he is its author, let us be dumb, not opening our mouths in the language of complaint against God, or of reviling against man, but acknowledging that we are punished far less than our iniquities deserve, let us possess our souls in holy patience, committing ourselves unto him that judgeth righteously. Let us earnestly deprecate his vengeful wrath, and devoutly supplicate his divine presence and power to support us in our sufferings, and to deliver us from our sins. If he knows our secret sins, he also knows our secret sorrows, even those which no human eye can see, and with which no human heart can sympathise. From him our sighs and groans cannot be hid; with him aspirations, inaudible to mortal ear, sound as loud, and prove as prevailing, if proceeding from a broken heart, as would the most piercing cries.

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever blessed God, we would worship, and bow down, and kneel before thee, our maker. May the feelings of our souls correspond, in some measure, to the lowly attitude of our bodies; and with deep prostration of spirit, with reverence and godly fear, may we now wait upon thee. Thou, O Lord, art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; sin is the abominable thing which thou hatest. And yet we, alas, are sinners before thee exceedingly. We have gone astray from thee ever since we were born. We have followed the devices and desires of our wicked hearts. We have done those things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and times and ways without number, in thought, word, and deed, we have offended against thy holy law. Our iniquities are gone over our head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for us. Yet to whom can we wretched sinners repair but unto thyself, the God of love and grace, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, Christ Jesus. To us belongeth confusion of face, as at this day; to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him. God be merciful to us sinners! Lead us by faith to the blood of sprinkling, that our iniquity may be taken away, and our sin purged. Shed down upon us the influences of the Holy Ghost to enlighten our understandings, to renew our wills, to refine and elevate our affections, and to sanctify and strengthen us for all holy obedience. Destroy in us the love of sin; embitter to us its fruits; save us from its dominion. In thee, O Lord, do we hope; for-

ake us not. O our God, be not far from us; make haste to help us, O Lord, our salvation. We thank thee, O thou preserver of men, that in mercy thou hast spared us to see another sabbath. May we be in the Spirit on the Lord's day. May we be very anxious to improve our religious privileges, and have grace given us to serve thee this day in thine ordinances without distraction. Carry us up to thy holy mountain, and make us joyful in thy house of prayer. Save, we beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, we beseech thee, send now prosperity. Be with thy ministering servant, our pastor, in declaring thy message, and grant that among us, and in all the churches, the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, in the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints. Have compassion on the afflicted; be to them a little sanctuary, and to all who may, in thy providence, be this day prevented, by necessary causes, from appearing in the public assembly. Let thy gracious presence and the consolations of thy love convert the chamber of sickness and the house of mourning, into the house of God and the gate of heaven. Save thy people, O Lord, and bless thine inheritance; feed them also, and lift them up for ever. Hear, O Lord, in heaven, these our humble supplications; accept our persons, and forgive our sins, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XL. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS XXXIX. XL.

REMARKS.

These psalms contain so many topics of useful meditation, that the only difficulty is selection. We have here brought before us, (xxxix. 1, 2.) the great guilt we are all too apt unconsciously to contract by sins of the tongue; that world of iniquity, that unruly and untameable member, full of deadly poison, which defileth and setteth on fire the whole body. How comes it that there are uttered so many profane, or slanderous, or false, or foolish speeches, but because men will not 'take heed to their ways, that they sin not with their tongue.' See James i. 26; iii. 13. The honour of Christ, and of Christ's gospel, is very nearly concerned in the pious and prudent conversation of Christians, more especially when they have to mix with the ungodly; for then 'silence even from good' is better than to drop a single word which might either wound his friends, or cause his enemies to speak reproachfully.

Let us next mark the impressive manner in which the psalmist (xxxix. 4.) describes death as our 'end.' Here, to all our business, and all our pleasure, to all

our hopes, and all our fears, to all our joys, and all our sorrows, in so far as this world is concerned, death puts an end; for that is the end of all men, and surely the living ought to lay it to heart. 'Lord, make me to know mine end!' What is the measure of our days? A hand-breadth. What is our age? Nothing. What is our best estate? Vanity; that is, a breath, a vapour, easily dissipated, and leaving no trace behind. 'Surely every man walketh in a vain show,' a mere shadowy image, as the word means. You have seen the dazzling meteor shoot across the firmament; you have admired the rainbow decked in its loveliest hues, or the gorgeous mass of golden clouds encircling and enthroning the setting sun; but you have looked again, and they were gone! Or you may have witnessed some display of the mimic art, in which puppets, or men as contemptible as puppets, strutted their short hour on the stage, were arrayed like monarchs, and talked like heroes; but when you saw them on the morrow, in their native haggardness and poverty, you marvelled at the strange illusion. Such like is the life of man! and the most imposing spectacles this world has to present, are but 'vain shows,' unsubstantial pageants, unreal mockeries. How foolish then to allow ourselves to be unduly 'disquieted' or elated by this passing and perishing scene! How vain to set our hearts on the riches, honours, pleasures, which are not! for not one atom of this world's good can we carry with us out of it, and though we could, it would avail us nothing at the bar of our Judge, or in the world of spirits. Yea, just in proportion to our success in heaping up treasures here, will be the bitterness of our final regrets when we are forced to bid them an eternal adieu. Soon must we 'go hence to be no more.' How full of solemn import are these two short and familiar words, 'No more!' Of each of us it will ere long be said that we are gone, and shall be seen 'no more' on the earth; and the place which now knows us through the week and on the sabbath shall know us 'no more,' for ever. But let every thing in our present condition and future prospects lead us to the Saviour, of whom the second of these psalms contains an illustrious prophecy. Burnt-offerings and sin-offerings were valuable only as the types and shadows of a better and nobler sacrifice, which God required, but which man could not bring. Then was heard the voice which said, 'Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O my God!' And in the pure humanity prepared for him by the Father, he actually obeyed and patiently endured all God's will, which was written in his heart. To him, the Prince of life, let us, dying sinners, look. In him, the Hope of Israel, let us wretched sinners rely. Poor and needy we may be, but it is enough if he think upon us. Cares may corrode us, but let us cast all our care upon him who careth for us. Burdens may oppress us, but let us cast our burden on him, and he will sustain us; yea, though we may be sunk in the 'horrible pit' of condemnation, and in the 'miry clay' of foul pollution, he can bring us up from every depth and rescue us from every danger; he can stablish our goings in holiness and peace, and put into our mouths the new song of praise.

PRAYER.

Father of mercies, and God of all grace, we come before thee, in the name of thy beloved Son, Christ Jesus, in whom thou art ever well pleased; and we beseech thee, for his sake, to take away all our iniquity and receive us graciously. Unto thee, whose we are, and whom we are bound to serve, we would present, through Christ, the homage of our bodies and spirits, and the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to thy holy name. Many, O Lord our God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if we would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. But we would, in an especial manner, desire to celebrate the riches of thy mercy, and the freeness of thy grace, in thy kindness towards sinners, by Christ Jesus. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift: and thanks be unto Christ, the Son of God, who so readily and cheerfully consented to be given. A body thou didst prepare for him, that in it he might fulfil the law which we have broken, and suffer the penalty which our sins deserve; that he might make an end of sin-offering, and bring in an everlasting righteousness, and thus lay a sure and immovable foundation of hope to every returning sinner. Lord, upon that foundation we would now build, in that finished salvation we would rejoice. Clothe us with his pure righteousness; wash us in his atoning blood; renew us after his heavenly image; subdue us to his entire control; uphold us by his free Spirit; may Christ dwell in our hearts by faith, may Christ be formed in us the hope of glory. We are poor and needy; think upon us, O our God, for good. Thou art our help and our deliverer; make no tarrying, O our God. We have enjoyed, through thy long-suffering forbearance, another day of the Son of man. Impress on our minds a sense of our accountability for the right improvement of the seasons and opportunities with which we are now favoured, and which will soon come to a close. Lord, make us to know our end, and the measure of our days, what it is, that we may know how frail we are. Teach us to cultivate the spirit of pilgrims and strangers here, that we may duly regulate our tempers, and order aright our conversation, that in prosperity we may be humble, and in adversity resigned. Follow with thy rich and efficacious blessing, all the services of this holy sabbath among us, and throughout the world. Let thy kingdom come; let thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. Let all

those that seek thee, rejoice and be glad in thee; let such as love thy salvation, say continually, The Lord be magnified. Dwell with us as a family. May our hearts be more and more knit together in Christian love; and may our united exercises and enjoyments on thy sabbaths below, prepare us for spending together the glorious sabbath of eternity. And now, Lord, what wait we for? Our hope is in thee; deliver us from all our transgressions, and hear us in our prayers, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 7.

SCRIPTURE—DEUTERONOMY V.

REMARKS.

This chapter contains an account of the re-publication of the ten commandments by Moses to the Israelites. The circumstance is well fitted to remind us of the truth, that we cannot too often hear the law of God rehearsed in our ears, seeing that the knowledge of it is so very needful, both to convince us of sin, and to guide us in duty.

Who is the God that claims our obedience? It is Jehovah, the One living and true God; of whom are all creatures, and through whom are all things. It is he, whom, as professing Christians, by our sacramental engagements, we acknowledge as our God, our wise Creator, our powerful preserver, our gracious benefactor, and the God of our salvation. For remarks on the law of God, see Ex. xx.

Alas! though we like Israel, have publicly and solemnly professed, that 'we will walk in all the ways which the Lord our God has commanded us,' how often have we 'turned aside, to the right hand or the left!' How inconsistent has been our profession with our practice! our promise, with our performance. We 'well said all that we spake' with our lips; but, 'O that there were such a heart in us that we would fear God, and keep all his commandments always, that it might be well with us and with our children for ever!' we cannot, any more than the Israelites, stand up before the divine majesty, justice and purity, and claim to be accepted and happy, on the footing of our own obedience. We, like them, stand in need of 'a prophet from among our brethren,' a Mediator between God and man. And, seeing that such an one has been mercifully raised up by God himself, and is fully authorised and qualified to execute every part of his high office, let us go unto God by him; let us seek for acceptance only through his merits; let us implore every needful blessing only through his advocacy; and especially when we shall have to go near before the holy Lord God in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, let us make mention of his righteousness, of his only; even of that righteousness, which is adequate to meet all the demands of the perfect law; and which, like him who procured it, is

'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' At the same time, let us give reverential heed to every message from God that he addresses to us, and yield a prompt, cordial and unreserved obedience to all that in God's name he enjoins.

PRAYER.

O Thou that dwellest in the heavens, we lift up our souls to thee. We would approach thee with that humility, which is founded on a sense of thy majesty and our meanness, thy purity and our pollution; but we would also come in that spirit of holy freedom, which is prompted by an apprehension of thy mercy and love in Christ Jesus. Enable us to form some adequate conceptions of thy glorious character, and thy wondrous ways. Thou art seated on a throne that is high and lifted up; thou wieldest the sceptre of universal empire; all creatures are in thy hand, all events are at thy disposal. Thou art the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Thou only hast immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. We bless thee, O Lord, for the manifestation thou hast been pleased to give of thyself, in the works of thy creation, and the dispensations of thy providence. Thine eternal power and Godhead may be clearly seen from the things which thou hast made; and never hast thou left thyself without witness to thy creatures here below, in that thou hast done them good, and given them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their mouths with food and their hearts with gladness. But we would specially thank thee, O God, on our own behalf, that in addition to all this, thou hast blessed us with the brighter and fuller discoveries of thy holy word. Thou didst make known thy ways to Moses, thine acts unto the children of Israel. To them thou showedest thy glory, and thy greatness; to them the voice of the living God spake out of the midst of the fire, and yet they lived. We rejoice before thee, O Lord, that unto us thou speakest, not from mount Sinai, but from mount Zion; not in the voice of terror, but in accents of love and peace. O may we see, that we refuse not him that speaketh to us from heaven! He who despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment shall we be thought worthy, if we tread under foot the Son of God, and do despite unto the Spirit of grace? Lord! turn us to repentance. Lord! save us by thy power. O! that there were such a heart in us, that we might fear thee and keep thy commandments always, not turning aside to the right

hand or to the left; that it might be well with us, and with our children for ever. Look thou upon us, and be merciful unto us, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name. Order our steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over us. Remember us, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people; O visit us with thy salvation: that we may see the good of thy chosen, that we may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that we may glory with thine inheritance. Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us according as we hope in thee. Thou hast graciously spared us through another night, and hast brought us to see the light and to enjoy the comforts of this new day. We laid ourselves down and slept; we awaked, for the Lord sustained us. To thy guardian care and holy keeping, we anew commit ourselves and all our concerns through this day. Prepare us for its duties; preserve us from its dangers. May we be in the fear of the Lord all the day long; and every where, and in all circumstances, may we act and endure as seeing thee, who art invisible. Let us not be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Bless us in the prosecution of our respective callings and employments; bless us in our basket and in our store; bless us in our going out and in our coming in. Let the beauty of the Lord our God, be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it, through Christ Jesus the Saviour. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRaise—PSALM CIII. 8.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE VII. 1—23.

REMARKS.

Much of the comfort of domestic life depends upon the proper discharge of the relative duties of master and servant. In the example of the amiable and pious centurion, Christian masters will find a fit model for their imitation. By a kind and condescending behaviour towards their dependents, they might expect, and by such conduct only can they reasonably expect, to gain their affection in return, Eph. vi. 5—9. Let Christian servants, on the other hand, remember that they too lie under corresponding obligations. By their sedulous attention to their employers' interests, by prompt obedience to their lawful commands, by unshaken fidelity to the trust committed to them, they may become as endeared to their masters as the centurion's servant was to his. But let all, of whatever rank in life, imitate the centurion's deep and unaffected humility. He thinks 'not himself worthy to come' to the Saviour; and

as if his very house were contaminated by the guilt of its inhabitant, he deems it unfit for the reception of the holy One of God. Like him, let us seek to be clothed with humility; let us not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think; let us abhor that haughty heart and lofty eye which so little besseem our dependence and helplessness, our guilt and pollution.

Yet the centurion's singular humility was not incompatible with the most singular and illustrious faith. He had seen or heard of Christ's miracles of mercy; and he concluded, upon the surest grounds, that his personal presence was not necessary for his servant's recovery; that he had only to speak and it was done, to will, and it was accomplished. Through all the disguise of his outward humiliation, the centurion's faith discerned the Redeemer's innate dignity and glory, and hence it procured for him the highest commendation from him who will not flatter, and who cannot be deceived. Let us seek to obtain like precious faith with him.

The other narrative contained in this passage is marked by strokes of the most touching tenderness, and the sublimest pathos. How simply graphic, yet strikingly impressive, is the description! 'Behold! there was a dead man carried out.' That is no unusual spectacle among ourselves. Day after day, we see our fellow-mortals carried out to their long home, and the mourners for the dead going about the streets. Let every passing funeral bring our own vividly up to our view, and suggest to us the momentous question: 'On the day when my body shall be laid in the dust, where will my spirit be?—in heaven, or in hell?'

The corpse carried out for burial was that of a young man, 'the only son of his mother—and she was a widow.' These few words exhibit to us one of those pictures of domestic sorrow which affect every heart. The only survivor of a family that had, perhaps, once been numerous; first left a widow, and now written childless; she is on her way to commit to the insatiable grave all that was dear to her in a world to which she now ceased to belong. They have passed the city gate; the house of death comes in view. But, at the very brink of the tomb, the place where she must leave her dead, there Jesus takes him up, and restores him alive to a mother's fond embrace. He makes no parade of him among the multitude, or throughout the country, as a trophy of his might; he simply 'delivers him to his mother!' Truly was it said, 'He hath done all things well!' The same sympathy and kindness which he showed to the desolate widow, he has taken with him to the heavenly world; and as it is inseparably combined with almighty power, we ought in no circumstances to doubt his ability or willingness to support or save us. And let our views also be carried forward to that day, 'for which all other days were made,' when the same voice, which said, 'young man, arise!' shall summon before his throne an assembled world; there too, shall we stand, and receive that doom which shall fix our state for weal or woe, throughout eternity.

PRAYER.

Almighty, and most merciful Father! we adore thee as the king eternal, immortal, invisible; the only living, and true, and wise God! How excellent is thy name in all the earth; thou hast set thy glory above the heavens, when we consider these heavens, the work of thy fingers, the sun, the moon, and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him? We alas! are forgetful of thee, but thou art never unmindful of us; we are too often weary of thy gentle yoke, but thou never weariest in doing us good. Thou art the God of our life, and the length of our days. Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice over us. Thou loadest us with benefits; thou crownest us with loving-kindnesses; thou givest us all things richly to enjoy. Bless the Lord, O our souls! and all that is within us, bless his holy name. May our long and ample experience of thy providential bounty, encourage us to seek of thee the richer and more enduring blessings of thy grace. Grant us, we beseech thee, thy Holy Spirit, to convince us of our need of a Saviour, and to show us the gracious adaptation of the gospel method, to our characters and circumstances as ignorant, guilty, depraved, and dying creatures. Lord, increase our faith in Christ thy Son, and may he be made of thee to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. We rejoice in the many recorded instances of his power and love, while he tabernacled in our flesh; and we believe that he is able and willing to save unto the uttermost all that come unto thee by him, seeing that he once died for sin, and ever liveth to make intercession for sinners. Lord Jesus! to whom can we go but unto thee? We are blind, open thou our eyes. We are deaf, open thou our ears. We are diseased and dying, say in a word, and we shall be healed, and arise to life eternal. In the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord, deliver us! Preserve us from that pride which was not made for man; adorn us with a meek and quiet spirit. Bless us as a family. May we live together in love; bearing each other's burdens, and bearing with each other's infirmities; subduing our tempers, and regulating our tongues. May the peace of God rule in our hearts, and whatever may be the relation in which we stand to one another, may the glory of God be ever our end and aim in every domestic duty. May every friend of ours be a friend of Christ, and an heir of heaven. Have compassion on the afflicted; soothe and

sustain the bereaved; succour the tempted; heal the broken-hearted; save the dying. Be the father of the fatherless, the husband of the widow, the shield of the stranger, the refuge of the destitute, the avenger of the oppressed. Bless abundantly thy church; enlarge its borders, and increase its prosperity. And now into thy hands we this night commend our bodies and spirits; do thou redeem us, O Jehovah! God of truth. Grant unto us the sleep thou hast promised to thy beloved; and, if thou art pleased to spare us to another day, may we be raised up for its duties, invigorated and refreshed. Mercifully forgive our sins, and hear our supplications, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXVI. 5.

SCRIPTURE—DEUTERONOMY VIII.

REMARKS.

The Lord brought Israel 'forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders.' The event itself claimed the deepest gratitude of the Jews, and its circumstances were calculated to inspire them with the most reverential feelings of awe, and fear of offending their Deliverer. As additional sanctions to his law, he made its faithful observance the condition of his favour to them as a nation, and threatened them with calamity and disgrace in the event of disobedience. He added the discipline of forty years' wandering in the wilderness, to wean them from their love of idolatry, imbibed in Egypt; to give them experience of his presence and special providence; and to prove them, i. e. to give them and their posterity the benefit permanently resulting from this long probation. Ver. 3. This trial was particularly meant to humble them, and there is a special propriety in the caution against pride being grounded upon their own experience of helpless dependence on a superior power for the supply even of the ordinary means of life. This supply was given immediately and miraculously from heaven, not in the food familiar to man, but in manna, a kind of provision which neither they nor their fathers knew, that they might be led to infer that the goodness of Jehovah was not limited to the supply of their temporal wants; that man was not to live by bread alone; and that the true life-giving and life-sustaining bread is not the produce of earth, but must descend from heaven. Ver. 4. They had other evidences of the protecting care and providence of God, in their raiment waxing not old, &c. It was no part of God's purpose to train them to the ordinary arts of life, which, in ordinary circumstances, and by ordinary means, they could easily acquire; but it did form an important part of that purpose to train them up in special dependence upon him from

whom cometh all good, and to impress them strongly with that dependence, by the exhibition of a manifest and standing miracle, during the time of their probation in the wilderness. Ver. 7. Even their sufferings were calculated to enhance their appreciation of the peace and plenty which they were soon to enjoy, while the remembrance of the past was equally well calculated to guard them against the danger of forfeiting their present abundance, and incurring their former privations by the sin of ingratitude. How important and impressive a lesson is taught to us in the fact, that with the Jews all these warnings, cautions, promises, and exhortations proved so ineffectual as to permit them, again and again, to fall into gross idolatry, and at last to incur the condemnation of rejecting him who came to them with the first offer of admission to that better land of promise, the heavenly Canaan, the new Jerusalem, where the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple, and where the saints of God shall reign for ever and ever. And how careful ought we to be in proving our experience of God's mercies, in considering his judgments, in the exercise of our Christian privileges; 'for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee!'

PRAYER.

O Lord, from whom we have our being, and in whom we have our well-being, we desire to acknowledge thee as the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Thy judgments are indeed unsearchable, and thy ways past our finding out. But although thou hast made justice and judgment the habitation of thy throne, thou art declaring thyself to us as a God of mercy. Thou art our Father and our God, and the Rock of our salvation. We bless thee that thou hast spoken unto us the word of salvation by thy Son, Jesus Christ, whom thou hast appointed heir of all things, through whom, and in whom, we are raised to the hope of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, with thee, our God, in heaven. In this indeed is love; O grant that the sense of thy goodness, and our consciousness of guilt, may lead us to repentance which needeth not to be repented of. May the love of God constrain us to do his holy will, rightly judging that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died that they who live might live no more unto themselves, but unto him who died and rose again, that his redeemed might be heirs of glory. We confess before thee our sins; they are more than can be numbered, and highly aggravated: forgive our sins, for the sake of him in whom thou art reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. Through him do thou accept of us graciously; in him do thou love us freely. Strengthen our faith, confirm our love, establish us unto every good thought, and word, and work. Create in us a clean heart, O God;

renew a right spirit within us. Impart to us more abundantly of the influences of thy Holy Spirit. Have mercy upon us, O God, according to thy loving-kindness in Christ Jesus; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out our transgressions with his atoning blood, and with the washing of regeneration, by the Spirit of all grace. Impress upon our hearts the warnings, realize to our souls the promises, of thine inspired word. Accept of our thanks for thy care of us during the past night, for thy goodness in permitting us to see the light of another day in the land of the living, and in the place of hope. Fit and prepare us for the duties of this day and of life; prepare us for death, for judgment, and for eternity. For us to live, may it be Christ; for us to die, may it prove great gain; and all that we ask is in the name, and for the sake, of our Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLV.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE VII. 24—50.

REMARKS.

John was indeed a prophet, yea, more than a prophet. His coming had been predicted by Malachi, his birth was announced by an angel, he had entrusted to him the honourable commission of preparing the way, going before the face, contemplating the person, and proclaiming the actual advent of the Lord of glory. He was also pre-eminently zealous, holy, self-denying, and instructed in evangelical truth. Ver. 28. He was a burning and a shining light, and, according to the testimony of him who cannot err, among them that were born of women there had not arisen a greater than John the Baptist. Yet he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. The apostles and evangelists were admitted to a greater intimacy with the Saviour, enjoyed clearer views of the gospel scheme, and received, in more abundant measure, the influences of the Holy Spirit; nay, even the humblest servant of Christ enjoys, under the gospel dispensation, a higher privilege in ordinances, clearer light in doctrine, and more abundant sources of consolation, in the complete canon of revelation, than the most distinguished of those prophets and holy men who ardently desired to behold the day of Christ's glorious triumph, and were not permitted. Having vindicated the dignity of the Baptist's character, and borne testimony to the truth of his commission, our Lord next adverts to the unreasonableness of the Jews in rejecting, and the inconsistency of the pleas on which they grounded their rejection of the gospel message. Like sullen, froward children, who resist all the attempts of their play-fellows to win their sympathy, either in joy or in sadness, they affected to regard as a madman, the stern ascetic who preached to them repentance; and

when Jesus came, without any pretension to such austerity, courteous in his manner, social in his demeanour, conversing freely with all classes of men, and affable to all, that he might win them to the truth, by displaying in his own person virtue in her native loveliness, they objected to him, that he was a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But heavenly wisdom is justified of all her children. John, as became him, in the capacity of one sent to prepare the way of the Lord, to preach repentance and self-denial, and to warn men of the wrath to come, exhibited in his appearance and manners those marks of mortification of which, spiritually, his hearers all stood in need; the Prince of peace, who came with full authority to proclaim the remission of sins, with equal propriety exhibited, in his walk and conversation, the divine benevolence which made provision for the redemption of a lost world. But the unbelieving Jews loved darkness rather than light, their deeds being evil. Ver. 37. How beautiful a contrast to the evil spirit of pride is furnished in the transaction here recorded, of the humble and affectionate behaviour of the woman who had been a notorious sinner, and how gracious our Lord's defence, how dignified and complete his vindication of the propriety of her conduct! The pharisee had indeed invited Jesus to his board; but, regarding him as a poor and mean person, who was receiving rather than conferring honour by the visit, he had neglected to offer him even the usual civilities shown by entertainers to their guests. The behaviour of this poor sinner tacitly reproached his incivility; and the parable of the two debtors compelled him to acknowledge, even on his own theory as a pharisee, accounting himself righteous, while he despised others, the propriety of her behaviour. If she had a deeper consciousness of favour shown to her, it was but natural that she should more anxiously desire to make open acknowledgment of her gratitude and love. Simon, too, was a debtor, and doubtless he knew that he had sins which required forgiveness—probably also he entertained some sense of gratitude towards God, that he was not as other men, nor even as this sinner; but he was not equally impressed with the magnitude of the debt, nor with the generosity of the creditor who alone could remit it. Therefore as (not his sin itself, which was perhaps equally great, though less scandalous and notorious than that of this woman, but) his consciousness of sin, and his sense of its remission, were less lively than hers; he loved little. Her faith saved her, for it led her to the only fountain which hath been opened for sin and for uncleanness. We are not to confound the transaction here recorded, with a similar one which took place at Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper.

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, at the close of another day we bow down before thee, our creator, our preserver, our bountiful benefactor. Thy mercies are new to us every morning. thy faithfulness and thy loving-kindness extend over us every night; we continually experience that thou, the

Lord, art very gracious. But while we acknowledge thy general providence, which is over all thy works, and express our gratitude for what, under thy special providence, we ourselves have experienced of protection and temporal comfort, we would not forget especially to bless thee for thy best gift, Christ Jesus the Saviour. We desire to bless thee for his atoning sacrifice, for his continual intercession, for his Holy Spirit. We bless thee for the abundant testimony given to him as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, for his blessed doctrine, for his pure precepts, for his holy life and perfect example. Give us grace, O Lord, to profit by our high privilege. Strengthen our faith, that we may lay hold of Christ and of his righteousness for our justification. Great is our sin, heavy our debt, grievous our transgression, but thy mercy is unbounded. With thee there is mercy; with our God is plenteous redemption. Our souls would therefore bless and magnify the Lord, our spirits would rejoice in God our Saviour, who forgiveth all our iniquities, who healeth all our diseases, who redeemeth our lives from destruction, who crowneth us with loving-kindnesses and with tender mercies. Enable us to realize more fully the sense of thy pardoning mercy in Christ Jesus, that the consciousness of our obligation, in all its magnitude, may inspire us with deeper gratitude and more intense love to thee, our great Benefactor. Let not the heaven of pharisaical pride be found in our hearts; take away from us all root of uncharitableness; enable us to come unto thee by that new and living way which thou hast appointed; to cast our cares upon the Lord, who careth for us, that we may rejoice in him who is the God of our salvation. Spread thy covering wings beneath and around us during the silent watches of this coming night, that we may sleep in safety. Give us to awake to the light of a new day, in circumstances of health and comfort; prepare us for its trials, its duties, its events. Guide us through life, comfort us at the hour of death, and be our portion throughout the endless ages of eternity, for the Lord our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRaise—PSALM XXXIV. 7.

SCRIPTURE—DEUTERONOMY IX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The Israelites were now about to enter upon the conquest and possession of the land of Canaan, and in the series of remarkable victories which awaited

them, they were to experience fresh proof, and unquestionable demonstration, that God was their defence, and the holy One of Israel their helper. They were preparing to pass over Jordan, when they should have to encounter nations more numerous, powerful, and warlike, than themselves, the children of the Anakim, or giants, who were proverbial for stature and military prowess, and whose resistance might be expected to be the more obstinate, because they were in possession of many strong-holds and fenced cities. But the Jews had, for their encouragement, the assurance that these formidable warriors should be subdued, driven out and destroyed, according to God's promise. This was evidently the doing of the Lord; and accordingly his people are warned against ascribing to themselves, what belonged only to him; but there was another warning, of which they stood at least equally in need. When they should witness his dealings in their favour, in the subjugation of the Canaanites, they would scarcely be prepared to deny that the hand of the Lord was manifest in the work; but they might be in danger of falling into the great error of supposing, that for their own righteousness' sake this interference took place, as it was, in part at least, on account of their wickedness that the former inhabitants of Canaan were driven out. Ver. 5, 6. God therefore gives them distinctly to understand, that he regarded them as a stiff-necked people, and that they might see how justly this character applied to them, Moses reminds them of their past misconduct, their murmurings, rebellions, and wickedness at Horeb, where they worshipped the golden calf, and provoked God to anger by their idolatry at Massah, Taberah, and Kibroth-hattaavah, (see Exod. xvii. 7; Num. xi. 1—4.) where they were guilty of sinful murmurings; and at Kadesh-barnea, where they had broken out into resistance and open rebellion (Num. xiv.) Ver. 14. &c. These their sins had greatly provoked the Lord, and it was only at the disinterested intercession of Moses that he spared to destroy them. They are reminded of these things for the purpose of convincing them that it was not because of their righteousness that they were now so signally favoured, but solely from God's regard to his own covenant, and that he might perform the word of promise which he had given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The Christian will ever be upon his guard against arrogating to himself the triumphs which await him in his warfare. Those sons of Anak, the devil, the world, and the flesh, are too powerful for him, except he fight under the banners of the Captain of salvation, and unless the Spirit of Christ be with him to secure the victory. Then indeed he can do all things through Christ strengthening him. He must also, even when most ready to acknowledge that it is God who fighteth for him, beware of that spiritual pride and conceit which would lead him to consider himself the peculiar object of heaven's regard and complacency, on account of his superior righteousness. Self-examination, and the candid retrospect of his past life, will show the believer on how insecure a foundation all such conceit rests. We

may and ought to regard our spiritual privileges, our Christian attainments, our religious experience, as tokens and manifestations of God's love, yet we are ever to keep in mind that these are covenant mercies, transmitted to us through a greater than Abraham; that it is for his sake, not for our own, that we are accepted, and consequently that not self-complacency, but humble adoration of God's unmerited goodness, properly results from and accompanies the believer's experience of his heavenly Father's love. The intercession of Moses was admitted of God, and prevailed for the temporal safety of the Jews: we have an all powerful Intercessor, through whom we have at all times freedom of access to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in our every time of need.

PRAYER.

Almighty, most gracious, and ever blessed God, thine we are, and on thee do we depend for the comforts of this present life, and for the joys of eternity. We were early cast upon thy care; thou hast nourished and brought us up as children, but we are deeply conscious, and with shame and confusion of face must acknowledge, that we have proved ungrateful for thy goodness, and unworthy of thy love. Times and ways without number have we sinned against thee, doing the things that we ought not to have done, and neglecting our known duty. It is because thy compassions fail not, that we are not consumed, it is because thou hast no pleasure in the death of sinners that thou art still addressing to us the exhortation and remonstrance, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? O Lord, do thou turn us, and we shall be turned; lead us to the smitten Rock, that our souls may be refreshed with the waters of salvation. Give us the bread of life, to sustain us during our pilgrimage; in the hour of trial, strengthen thou our faith, and confirm our patience, that we may not provoke thee by sinful murmurings; write thy law upon our hearts, that we may keep it in constant remembrance; mortify our carnal affections, subdue our rebellious passions, enable us to fight the good fight of faith, and give unto us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. Sanctify to us all the dispensations of thy providence; enable us, by reflecting upon our past experience, to distrust ourselves, and to put our confidence in thee, who alone canst deliver us from evil, and work in us, both to will and to do that which is well-pleasing in thy sight, and profitable to our own souls. Enable us to finish our pilgrimage rejoicing; give us an easy passage over the Jordan of death, and an entrance abundantly into the land of Christian promise, the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Sa-

viour Jesus Christ, unto whom, with thee, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, one God, we desire to ascribe all honour, and glory, and blessing, and praise, world without end. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE VIII. 1—25.

REMARKS.

The women here spoken of had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities; much had been forgiven them, and they loved much. They ministered cheerfully, and doubtless considered it a high privilege to minister, of their worldly substance to him who had administered to them what was more than all riches. Ver. 5; compare Matt. xiii. 3—23, and Mark iv. 1—20. Our Saviour taught the people in parables, or comparisons, for many wise reasons: this method of instruction was agreeable to the practice of the Jewish doctors, and to the custom among eastern nations generally; it was calculated to engage the attention, and to convey useful lessons, without arousing national, sectarian, or individual prejudices; it had the advantage over direct precept of impressing upon the mind more forcibly, and enabling the memory more easily to retain practical lessons of truth; and it was attended with this peculiar advantage in the case of our Saviour's doctrine, that it furnished a test of his hearers' appetite for divine truth, and of their desire to cultivate the knowledge of this hidden mystery of the gospel. To his disciples, to those who were impressed with his wisdom, and were earnestly solicitous to benefit by his instruction, to them it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to the careless and the unconcerned, the scoffer and the worldling, who had no relish of divine things, the mystery or hidden meaning, was, for a time, left unexplained, that their judicial blindness might contrast the more strongly with Christian privilege. The parable of the sower has been opened up by our Lord himself, so minutely in all its parts, and so fully with regard to its meaning, as to supersede all farther explanation. It remains for us only to examine ourselves in regard to its application, and to read to our own hearts the instructive lesson which it conveys. Ver. 18. We must 'take heed how we hear;' the light of the gospel is not to be hid. By the fruits of the Spirit, the presence and influence of the Spirit may best, may only, be ascertained; and the gifts of the Spirit are sure earnest of a more abundant measure of spiritual grace and enjoyment: to him that hath shall be given more fully; but the unfruitful professor shall be deprived of all benefit, even from that which he seemeth to have in privilege. Ver. 21. The true relatives of Christ, are they 'which hear the word of God, and do it.' They are 'heirs with God, and joint-heirs with Christ.' He is their elder brother. Ver. 25. 'What manner of man is this? for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they

obey him.' He who exercised sovereignty over the elements of nature, even he it is who controls our evil desires and unruly passions. If we rest upon him by faith, the turmoil will cease, a calm will ensue, and the vessel which contains our hope shall reach in safety a haven of rest.

How invaluable are our Christian privileges! We may not indeed minister to our Saviour's personal wants, to his bodily comfort; but we have the assurance, that, whatever we contribute from love to him, for the purpose of relieving the wants, or alleviating the sufferings of the needy and the afflicted, he will account as done unto himself. Freely we have received; let us freely and liberally communicate. The Lord scattereth among us his good seed; let us pray to him that we may be enabled to receive it in an honest and good heart, which is of his own preparation; that neither the devil may snatch away from us the seed of hope, nor temptation and persecution wither the blade of promise, nor the cares or pleasures of life choke and render unfruitful the harvest; but that 'having heard the word we keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.' We have light to guide us: let us walk as children of the light, and of the day. Let us pray for the spirit of adoption, that the Spirit himself may more fully 'bear witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God.' Let us seek not only to have faith, but to keep our faith in lively and constant exercise, that, secure in his presence, whom the winds and the waves obey, we may experience neither fear nor disquietude amid the troubles of life, or from the terrors of death.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we desire to lift up our eyes to that place where thine honour dwelleth, and to worship thee, the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only living, wise, and true God. Thou hast never left thyself without a witness to the children of men; the heavens declare thy glory, and the earth is full of thy goodness. But we desire to bless thee especially for that still clearer and more gracious manifestation of thyself, which thou hast made to us in him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, and in whom we are privileged to contemplate thee as our gracious and reconciled Father. For his sake, regard us, we beseech thee, not as we are in ourselves, polluted with sin, and prone to evil, but as justified through his blood, sanctified through his Spirit, and partakers of his righteousness. As the redeemed of the Lord Jesus, may we be enabled to evidence our affection for his person, by our attachment to his service, our obedience to his law, our love of the brethren. Enable us to walk in thy statutes, as children of the light and of the day, not as fools, but as wise. When we meditate upon thy law, may we be taught of the Holy Spirit, and instructed unto all saving knowledge. Work thou in us that preparation

of heart necessary to the proper reception of thy word, that as good seed, sown in a good soil, it may take root and spring up, refreshed by the dews of thy grace, and matured under the benign influence of the Sun of righteousness, till it bear fruit according to the measure of thy grace, even an hundred-fold. Take away from us the stony heart of unbelief; work in us deep and abiding impressions of gospel truth, that our faith fail not in the day of temptation; let neither the cares of the world nor its pleasures, occupy that place in our hearts which religion justly claims; but do thou enable us to keep our hearts with all diligence, seeing that out of the heart are the issues of life. We desire to place our confidence upon the Lord Jesus Christ, by faith in his name. Enable us to exercise this faith constantly, that we may have our Christian hope as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. We commit ourselves to thy gracious protection during this night, and through life. Never leave us, never forsake us; and when thy good pleasure in us is accomplished with regard to this life, mercifully receive us into thy rest, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CVII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—DEUTERONOMY X.

REMARKS.

It is an important truth that 'days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.' For this and other reasons, this chapter deserves serious consideration. Its truths were delivered by Moses when he was an hundred and twenty years old, in the eleventh month of the fortieth year, from the time he and the Israelites left Egypt. He was soon to die on mount Nebo, and they were to cross Jordan, and take possession of the promised land. As there were many of them then alive, who had not witnessed the early occurrences in the wilderness, the aged patriarch rehearses to the people the most important circumstances that had taken place during their long journey through the desert. In this chapter he celebrates the kindness of Jehovah, in writing the divine law on the second two tables of stone, which were to be deposited in the ark, and to supply the want of the first two that had been broken. He reminds them of the death of his brother, and of Aaron's son, Eleazar, succeeding to the office of high-priest. We may observe a marked reference to the important fact, that the Lord separated a particular tribe to bear the ark of the covenant, and to do the duties of the holy ministry. For this purpose, since the tribe of Levi was to be excluded from becoming proprietors of any share of the land of Canaan, and the priests to have

no part nor inheritance with their brethren, Jehovah had settled it as a law, that the Levites were to receive the tithe of the produce of the land as their inheritance, appointed by Jehovah to maintain a standing ministry. He rehearses the laws of God, and urges the duties of piety, mercy, and kindness to strangers, as having been themselves strangers in the land of Egypt.

Let us remember that it is the duty of families and of individuals, to review all the kindness of God, in sparing and guarding them, refraining from executing judgment on them on account of sin, crowning them with loving-kindness and tender mercies. They should remember that every benefit he bestows, lays them under a stronger obligation to love the Lord, and to serve him diligently and faithfully; and cheerfully to obey all his commandments. Let them bear in mind, that they have the same duties to perform as had the Israelites, the same promises of blessings in the case of their proving faithful to him, and the same threatenings of judgment in the event of their being disobedient and rebellious.

PRAYER.

O Thou that hearest and answerest prayer, Jehovah, God of truth, attend to the voice of our supplication this morning, and turn not away our prayer from thee, nor thy mercy from us. In the all-prevailing name of him whom thou hearest always, we desire to pray in the Spirit. We know not well how to pray, or what to ask for as we ought, but may the Spirit himself help our infirmities. O that we may have suitable impressions of thy nature and character, thy glory and majesty, thy mercy and grace. We confess, that by nature and practice we are children of wrath, because we are children of disobedience, even as others. If by thy free grace a saving change has been begun in us, do thou carry it on and perform the good work, until the day of Jesus Christ. We acknowledge that our progress in knowledge and in holiness, has not corresponded to the favourable circumstances in which we have been placed for moral and spiritual advancement. We have reason to blush and be ashamed before thee, on account of our transgressions, and more and more to cry for pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. We, alas! are too often unfaithful servants to thee, our divine Master, undutiful children to our heavenly Father, unthankful to our best Friend, and ungrateful to our best benefactor, and unworthy subjects to thee, the Sovereign of the universe. We cast ourselves on thy mercy and grace, revealed through Jesus Christ. For his sake pardon our multiplied offences, and render us more obedient in the time to come. We thank thee for sending him as our Redeemer; one who is mighty to save unto the uttermost. We bless thee for all that he did, and taught,

and suffered for our salvation; for all that he is now doing, and is yet to perform. We desire to rely on his mediation—his finished work of atonement, his resurrection, ascension, and intercession at thy right hand. Do thou graciously enable us to discern more of his beauty, excellence, and suitableness as a Saviour to us; to rely more implicitly on his merits,—to believe more firmly his doctrines—to obey his precepts—to be conformed to his image, submissive to his will, and assimilated to his example. We thank thee for thy mercies to us during the night, for the refreshing repose thou hast vouchsafed to us, invigorating us for the duties of the day. We bless thee, that we are yet in the land of the living, and in the place of hope, and in so comfortable circumstances. Thou hast made the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice over us. Blessed be the God of our salvation, for all his mercies to us. This day be at our right hand, and we shall not be moved. Keep us from evil, that it may not grieve us; save us from danger, that it may not injure us. May we set the Lord before us, and whatsoever we do, whether we eat or drink, may we do all to thy glory and praise. May no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. May we walk as children of the light and of the day, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Be gracious to the afflicted, send help from trouble, for vain is the help of man. Be near to them who are near to death. When flesh and heart have begun to faint and fail, be thou the strength of their heart, and their portion for ever. Grant them victory over death and the grave, and make them more than conquerors through him that loved us. Hear our prayers, pardon all our sins, and grant us the answer of peace, and all needful blessings, through Christ. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXXIX. 1

SCRIPTURE—LUKE VIII. 26—56.

REMARKS.

Our Saviour's power over satan and his emissaries was signally manifested, in the miraculous cure he performed on the demoniac who met him before entering the city. Out of Mary Magdalene he cast seven devils, but the condition of this man shows his to have been a worse case, and more inveterate, considering the number that possessed him, the period during which he had been tormented, and the

terrific influence exercised by the demons over the victim of their cruelty. This is manifest from the description given of the melancholy effect produced on the man, as described by the sacred historian.

For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil, and one proof of this was evident from the circumstance of the unhappy man having been so sore and so long vexed with demons, whose power had been, as it were, completely confirmed and established, and who had driven him to act and to live like one who had completely lost his reason and become quite frantic. The cry which he uttered, when he, seeing Jesus approaching, fell down before him, may be regarded as dictated by the chief of the evil spirits by whom he had been kept in misery. The exclamation was the expression of fear, which the evil spirits felt at the approach of Jesus Christ. It might be terror of his superior power to compel them to quit their victim, and depart wherever the Saviour might command them. It is painfully interesting to notice that while the unbelieving Jews resisted the evidence of his miracles, denying his dignity, refusing to worship him, or to acknowledge him as the Saviour, unclean spirits confessed him to be the Son of God most high. Ver. 28. The principal of the wicked demons may be regarded as (for himself and the others) prompting the man to express the sentiment—I am not here to engage in any contest with thee, for I know thee to be the Son of God, and implore thee not to exert thy superior power over me, and not to torment me at this time. This was uttered in consequence of Christ's authoritative command to come out of the man.

When our Saviour had cured the woman who had been diseased twelve years, but who, on touching his garment, was healed, he asked, who touched me? though he must have known who it was on whom he had exerted his miraculous power. But in that case, as well as in that of the unclean spirits, he put the question, 'what is thy name?' to elicit an answer, not for his own information, but for that of the persons present, that they might be more fully convinced of the certainty and the greatness of the miracle performed. These were manifest from the answer of the evil spirits, about to be dispossessed, acknowledging that many devils were in the man. This appears also from their entering into a great herd of many swine. It is thought that our Lord permitted the evil spirits to destroy these animals, as a punishment to the Gadarenes. They belonged to Jews whom Hyrcanus had prohibited to keep swine; and, as unclean beasts, they were forbidden by the law of Moses, to which these Jews professed to adhere; so that they might well be regarded as carrying on an unlawful traffic in feeding such animals, contrary too to their own sacred law. It is painful to think that the Gadarenes, notwithstanding they were convinced that a great miracle had been wrought by Christ, instead of requesting him to remain and preach to them the gospel, entreated him to depart from them, fearing him as if he had been an enemy, instead of welcoming him as a teacher sent from God. It is thus that sinners say unto Christ, 'Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.'

As the man was found sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, so every one who applies to Christ for his power to heal spiritually, will be found waiting on him to be taught by him as a prophet, will be clothed by the raiment of his righteousness, purified by his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit, converted to a right state of mind, in opposition to his former condition of guilt, depravity, and moral insanity.

PRAYER.

Father of mercies and God of all consolation, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we desire at this time to draw near to thee, the only true God, through the one Mediator, and by the one Spirit. May we never approach thee with wandering minds, or with hearts not rightly impressed, but always with true hearts, in full assurance of faith. We worship thee as the being possessed of every possible perfection and excellence. The glories of thy nature and the riches of thy grace infinitely transcend the comprehension of the most exalted creatures in the universe. We acknowledge that we are involved in the apostasy of our first parents, and that we have often given evidence of the natural depravity of the human heart, by our violations of thy commandments. Though thou hast nourished and brought us up as children, we have too often acted as rebels against thee. Which of thy laws have we not broken? We have sinned against thee in thought and in feeling, in word and in action, wasted precious time, misimproved our advantages, and not duly occupied our talents. We would take with us words, and say, Take away our iniquity, and receive us graciously, and love us freely. Enable us to hate sin, to forsake every false and wicked way, and to walk stedfastly in the path of the just. Make us thankful, keep us humble, excite us to be watchful, and incline us to be more spiritually-minded. Enlighten our minds, purify our hearts, subdue our passions, elevate our affections. Sanctify us wholly in soul, body, and spirit. Lord, increase our faith, strengthen our love, invigorate our hopes, quicken our zeal in thy service, and fill us with all joy and peace in believing. Blessed be thy great name for all thy mercies, but especially for Jesus Christ, thine unspeakable gift. We thank thee that thou sparedst not thine own Son, but freely gavest him for us, and that with him, also, thou wilt freely give thy people all things. We desire to acknowledge, with gratitude, thy kindness to us this day, for supplying our wants, shielding us from danger, watching over us, keeping us in our out-going and in-coming, and crowning us with loving-kindness and with tender mercies. Forgive whatever thy pure and

holy eye may have seen to be wrong in our minds, our hearts, our language, or our conduct, this day. We desire to commit ourselves to thy care and keeping during the silent watches of the night. Watch thou over us, when all our senses shall be sealed in sleep, and we exposed to dangers which we could neither foresee nor prevent. If it be thy holy will, grant us that repose which we think necessary to recruit our minds and our bodies after the labours of the day that is passed; or if debarred from natural rest, may we enjoy spiritual rest in the Lord, in thy character, perfections, and promises, and the hope of at length entering into thy glorious rest in a better world. May we remember thee on our bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Accept of thanks for every blessing; supply every want, forgive every sin, for all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 8.

SCRIPTURE—DEUTERONOMY XI.

REMARKS.

In this chapter we see the necessity and importance of being taught our duty to God, and of his precepts being frequently enforced, as well as his doctrines inculcated. Though the preceding chapter contains several earnest exhortations to the Israelites to love and serve God, yet Moses returns to the subject, and reiterates his injunctions to the chosen tribes to love the Lord, to keep his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments always. This teaches us 'that precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little' of religious instruction. He addresses another exhortation to them to love and serve God, reminding such as were then more advanced in life, that they had been spectators of the wonders that God had wrought for them in Egypt, and against Pharaoh and his band at the Red sea. As a reason for them to be humble, and watchful, and faithful, he adverts to the judgments which their daring rebellion had provoked Jehovah to inflict on some of their nation, especially the tremendous punishment inflicted on Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and their guilty companions. Observe how strenuously he urges the people to keep all the divine commandments, enforcing them by the promise of blessing in the land of Canaan. He again solemnly warns them against idolatry. Moses further reminds them of what they were to do with the law of God. In order that they might remember and obey it, they were to keep it in their hearts, to be careful in instructing their children in the divine commandments, and to take special means for preserving it in their own memories. As another inducement to persuade them to do this, they were, if

they kept God's commandments, to be successful in expelling the heathen nations from Canaan, to possess in it an extensive and valuable country, and to be invincible to all their enemies.

We should be induced to love and serve God by higher motives, yet also by the consideration of his kindness to us in regard to the happy land which he has granted us to inhabit, the many comforts we enjoy, as contrasted with those in other countries especially the means of grace and salvation. Christians should seriously think of the value and importance of the scriptures and the ordinances of the gospel; and they who are placed at the head of a family should feel and act on their obligations to have their children and domestics instructed in the doctrines and precepts of the scriptures.

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, we adore thee as the eternal God, the creator, preserver, and governor of the universe; upholding all things by the word of thy power. We worship thee as the omniscient and omnipresent God. Thou art eternal in thine existence, unchangeable in thy nature, and everlasting in thy duration. What reason have we to prostrate ourselves in the dust before thee? We are frail and sinful dust and ashes. We are but of yesterday and know nothing, our foundation is in the dust, we dwell in cottages of clay and are crushed before the moth, and our sin are as a thick cloud gone over our heads. We confess that our transgressions are multiplied and heinous, aggravated by our relation to thee as our creator and preserver, our best friend and bountiful benefactor; by the benefits thou hast conferred, the professions we have made, the privileges we have enjoyed, the precepts and the promises, the admonitions and warnings of thy holy word. Most merciful God, look on us in pity, and for the sake of him who came into the world to save sinners, deliver us from thy love and the power, the guilt and pollution of all sin. We pray that our souls may be purified by the power of thy Holy Spirit in the blood of Christ, that cleanseth from all iniquity. O Lord subdue remaining depravity within us, and incline our hearts to keep thy law. Dispose and enable us, by thy grace, to be more faithful to thee, more diligent in duty, more vigilant and circumspect, more steadfast and immovable, more abounding in the work of the Lord. May we feel more strongly our dependence on thee, at our need of thy help; more ardently desiring and more earnestly seeking the aids of thy Spirit to confirm and strengthen all the principles of the divine life in our souls. Enable us to be more aware of the plagues of our own heart, to watch more carefully, and strive more vigorously against the operation of indwelling corruption.

the allurements of the world, and the snares of our grand adversary. May the Holy Spirit render more effectual to us the truths of thy blessed word. May we more forcibly perceive their importance, feel their power, and live under their influence. O grant that the word of Christ may dwell in us richly, and that we may be strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man. What shall we render to the Lord for all his goodness to us? Thanks to thy name for all thy mercies, temporal and spiritual, to us as a family and as individuals. O that we may truly feel thankful in our hearts, whilst we unite in expressions of gratitude to thee for thy kindness to us, during the night that has passed. We laid us down in peace, slept in quietness, and awaked in health, because thou hast sustained us. We render thanks to thee for continuing us in existence, in health of body and soundness of mind, and in the enjoyment of our individual and family comforts. Be with each of us during this day. Help us to cherish a realizing sense of thy presence, of our dependence on, and responsibility to, thee. Keep us in the fear of thee, the Lord, all the day; and in whatever situation we may be placed, may we think, and feel, and speak, and act as seeing thee who art invisible. May we be continued in life and health, and each of us be able and willing, after the close of the day, to meet around the family altar, to present the evening sacrifice of prayer and praise. Forgive us in mercy all our sins, and accept of us and our services, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XVIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE IX. 1—27.

REMARKS.

We may well admire the power of the Redeemer, as signally manifested in his not only casting out evil spirits, but communicating to his disciples a delegated power to dispossess all demons, and to cure all diseases. Before sending them forth, he gave them special directions how they were to act in fulfilling the work which they were appointed to perform. He gave them the power of working miracles, to attest the divinity of their mission. Before they were to depart to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, they were forbidden by Christ to take unnecessary care about the means of subsistence by the way. They were to travel expeditiously, and to return soon to give an account of their labours. It was a sufficient reason for debarring them from loading themselves with bread, that the labourer is worthy of his meat; meaning, that, as the servants of Christ, they would be supplied with the necessities of life by the people to whom they were to preach

and perform cures; and they might trust in divine providence that God would supply their wants when they were engaged in their good work.

We see the wisdom of their Master, in giving them this prudent caution (as another evangelist tells us), that when they went to any town or city they were to inquire who in it was worthy—worthy in character for hospitality and piety, that they might not hurt their cause by lodging in a disreputable family. They were to abide in the house they first entered, in order to avoid all appearance of inconstancy or fickleness; and to refrain from going from house to house, changing their abode in the same place, and thus to show nothing like discontentment with their domestic accommodation, thus to maintain a suitable gravity, corresponding with their character as his disciples, rather than to seem anxious to obtain more liberal entertainment. That they might be prepared for what they should experience, he forewarns them, that when any refused to receive them and their doctrine, they were to give a strong testimony against such as rejected the gospel, and showed contempt for the messengers of salvation, as also the Saviour by whom they had been sent. The Jews thought there was something so sacred in the land of Palestine, that when they returned from travel in foreign countries inhabited by idolaters, they stopped at the boundary of their own country, and before crossing it, they wiped from their feet the dust of the heathen-land, that no particle of pagan earth might pollute, as they thought, the soil of the holy land. The significant action, therefore, which the disciples were to do, when they and the gospel might be refused, was to be regarded as an intended intimation, that when the Jews spurned at the Saviour and his gospel, they were no longer to be regarded as the people of God, but the same as they were heathens.

We should be excited to cherish gratitude to God for sending the gospel to our country, formerly a land of heathen darkness. What obligations do we owe to God and the Saviour, when we think that our nation, that was not of the house of Israel, but formerly blinded pagans, have long enjoyed the word of life! How thankful should we be for its happy effects! Has it really been effectual as the means of producing a saving change on our own hearts and lives? Let us be willing to aid its wider diffusion in our own and other lands.

Let us rejoice to know that when the servants of Christ, whether ministers or private Christians, are called to arduous duties, or are placed in difficult and trying circumstances, they are not left to go a warfare on their own charges, not left to their resources, but have the promise of guidance, protection, and support, and are assured that God's grace shall be sufficient for them, and his strength seen to be perfect in their weakness. Let us frequently retire with the Redeemer for prayer and meditation, and give him thanks for the bread of life that came down from heaven; and deny ourselves, and confess and follow him through good report, and bad report.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, thou art the king eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise, and true,

and living God. Thy wisdom is unsearchable, and thy ways past finding out. Thou rulest in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of this world. Thou rulest in the raging of the sea, and in the tumults of the people. Spotless holiness, and immutable truth, inflexible justice, and inviolable faithfulness, the richest mercy and grace, infinite love, unbounded goodness, the tenderest compassions, and every glorious attribute, are thine. Thou art self-existent, and absolutely independent of all thy creatures. We come not to inform thee of our wants, as if thou wert unacquainted with them; to remind thee, as if forgetful; or to persuade thee, as if thou wert unwilling to supply them; but we would humbly and gladly acknowledge our own helplessness, insufficiency, and entire dependence on thee; and be more grateful to our heavenly Benefactor, by whom our wants are all supplied. How unsuitably have we required thee for all thy benefits, and, how utterly unworthy of the least of all thy mercies! How prone to overlook their number and value! We have been too apt to be forgetful of thee and thy great mercies, and when comforts have been removed on which our hearts were set, or benefits withheld which we thought essentially necessary to our enjoyment, we have been disposed to feel as if dissatisfied or displeased with thee and thy dispensations. O God, pity, and pardon and purify us in the blood of our Redeemer. By thy blessed Spirit correct our errors and faults, and form in us more of the temper and disposition of thine adopted children. Make us to feel and to act more as it becomes such as are the objects of thy redeeming love, the subjects of thy saving grace, and the heirs of thine everlasting kingdom. Fulfil in us all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power. May we diligently be followers of them who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises, being rendered faithful unto the death, so that unto us may be given the crown of life. Give us grace to fit us for fighting the good fight, finishing our course, and keeping the faith. What thanks do we owe thee for thy kind dealings to us as a family! It is because we have obtained help from God, that we, who are now before thee, continue till this hour. O thou who declaredst thyself to be the God of all the families of Israel, be our God and portion for ever more. Make us more and more a holy and a happy family, and train us up for the great family in heaven. Send, O Lord, the light of the gospel to the benighted regions of heathen ignorance and idolatry. May the Sun of righte-

ousness arise and shine on them with healing in his wings. Give success to the gospel wherever it is preached, and bless the efforts made to spread it more widely at home and abroad. O thou Shepherd of Israel who never slumberest nor sleepest, protect us this night. May no plague come near our dwelling. May we obtain refreshing sleep, under divine protection, and with the light of the returning day, enjoy the light of our heavenly Father's countenance lifted upon us. Grant us the blessings best suited to us, forgive all our iniquities, and accept of us in Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXII. 6.

SCRIPTURE—DEUTERONOMY XVIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

There is here set before us a renewed charge and an express appointment, regarding the maintenance of the priesthood, and we are thus clearly taught, on the one hand, that they who 'minister in the name of the Lord,' are not to be engrossed with the pursuits and possessions of this world, and on the other hand, that they are not to be left without a suitable support, secured to them by positive enactment. There is presented to us, in the next place, a renewed warning against idolatry in general, and particularly against those debasing superstitions, to which it leads its blinded votaries. All attempts to gain information or assistance from inferior, invisible powers, are declared to be evil and abominable in the sight of God, and peculiarly offensive and inexcusable in the case of those who are blessed with the full use of his word, and the regular ordinances of his worship. As the people of Israel were reminded, much more may all believers of the gospel be admonished, of the more suitable methods provided for learning, as far as necessary, God's gracious purposes concerning them, namely, in the writings of inspired men, whom, 'at sundry times, and in divers manners,' he hath commissioned to proclaim his will; and above all, in the ministrations of that great prophet, like unto Moses, as a lawgiver and mediator, who both reveals the will of the Father, and promises all things needful for our true good. There is, finally, a solemn denunciation of God's displeasure against all who shall refuse that Prophet, to whom he hath borne witness in so many ways, and by such mighty works, and we are assured, that God will require it of every man who shall make light of his grace and truth through the Son of his love, the express image of his person, who hath come as 'a light into the world,' and a refuge from 'the wrath to come.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us learn to value aright the unspeakable privilege of knowing and worshipping the only living

and true God, and having his own holy word in our hands to guide our feet in the ways of life and peace. Let us diligently and devotedly attend to its instructions, as the true light to our path, and the source of everlasting consolation to our hearts. Let us consider seriously how unworthy and inconsistent it would be on our part, to act in any respect as if we were still left in all the darkness and doubts of the heathen world, and to imitate any of their vain and sinful devices for discovering the secrets of futurity, or the sources of our felicity. As we know and believe that he, who first gave us our being, alone upholdeth our souls in life, and ordereth our lot on earth, let us duly reflect that, with such a protector and provider, we do not need to seek, and cannot expect to find, any better counsels or surer grounds of confidence than he hath been pleased to make known in his word. Let us learn to commit ourselves, and all that concerneth us, and especially the keeping of our souls, unto him as to a faithful Creator, and rest persuaded, that, according to his gracious promise, he will make all things work together for good to them that love his name. Having received as our Lord that heavenly Prophet who came into the world to show us the Father, and to bring us to the Father, let us learn to possess our souls in patience, and to rest persuaded that 'he who spared not his own Son, will with him also freely give us all things.' Let us be more concerned to secure through him that good part which shall never be taken away from us, than to search into the shifting scenes of our present fleeting existence. Let us look forward every day more earnestly to the duties which belong to us, than to the events which may befall us, and give heed, above all things, to him who speaketh to us from heaven, that he may bring us at last to those mansions in heaven, which he hath gone to prepare 'for all them that love his appearing.'

PRAYER.

We adore and bless thee, O Almighty God, as the Most High over all the earth, who hast created all things by thy power, and who orderest all events by thy providence. In thee alone it is that we do live, and move, and have our being. Our times, O Lord, are wholly with thee; and all that we have here is at thy sovereign disposal. We bless thy great and holy name, that thou hast not left us to sit in darkness, without hope, and without God in this world, but hast graciously made the day-spring from on high to visit us, to guide our feet in the way of life and peace. We give thee humble thanks and praise that thou hast cast our earthly lot in a land of Christian light, and that we have thy holy word in our hands to show us what is good, and what thou the Lord requirest of us. We give praise for the knowledge of him who is the way, the truth, and the life, and through whom thou art inviting us to come unto thee, for rest and peace to our souls for ever. Help

us, O our God, to come unto thee, through faith in his name, both for mercy to pardon, and for grace to help in every time of need. Grant us, for his sake, the forgiveness of all our sins, and peace with thee, our God, at all times. Help us to acknowledge thy hand, ordering all things here concerning us, and to yield ourselves, and all that belongeth to us, to thy gracious disposal, that thy will may be done in us on earth, as it is done in heaven. Knowing thy great loving-kindness through the Redeemer, may we be enabled to rest persuaded, that with him thou wilt give us all things needful for our true good, and that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Help us to walk this day as seeing thee who art invisible, and to sanctify thee, the Lord God, in our hearts. Grant us, in all our duties, the direction of that wisdom which cometh down from above, and the protection of thy good providence in all our ways. Prosper us in our way, as thou seest to be truly for our good, and provide for all our necessities out of the riches of thy bounty. Teach us to rest contented in thy holy will concerning us, and dispose us to be labouring not merely for the meat which perisheth, but for that also which endureth unto life everlasting. Hear us, O Lord, and accept us, and answer us, and all that we do ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXVIII. 24.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE IX. 28—62.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The visible effulgence with which the Redeemer's person was surrounded at this wonderful scene on the mount, may serve to convey some representation of that heavenly glory which is inherent in his divine nature, but which he had veiled, for a season, under the form of man. The attendance of Moses and Elijah, and their communings with him during this display of his glory, distinctly pointed him out as the promised Messiah, to whom the law and the prophets gave witness, and who was now come to fulfil their testimony. Their conversation, in particular, respecting his decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, directs the faith of his followers to his humiliation on the cross, as that great mystery of godliness which is designed to yield so much glory to God and good to man, and into which the angels of heaven and the spirits of the just at all times desire to look. The voice which came from the excellent glory, proclaims him to all people as the Son of the Highest, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, whom it is our greatest concern

to hear and to obey in all things that he may say unto us. The whole scene here described presents a glimpse of that glorified state into which the souls of believers do immediately pass after death; when even their vile bodies shall be fashioned like unto their Lord's glorious body, and they shall see him as he is, as Moses did, 'face to face;' when they shall be no longer saddened by any anticipated suffering or apprehended interruption, as these disciples were on the mount, but, triumphing with songs of praise in the purchased blessings of his cross, shall continue to behold, without intermission, those never fading glories which surround his throne in the heavens, as 'God over all, blessed for ever.' Amen.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us desire and do our endeavour to have our souls at all times awake to the unspeakable glories of our exalted Redeemer, and of those heavenly mansions which he has gone to prepare for them that love him. Let us continually look unto him, by faith, as mighty to save, both by the merits of his death, and by the power of his resurrection; and labour, by his grace, to live henceforth not unto ourselves, but unto him who thus died for us and rose again. Let us daily keep in mind, however, that we are not yet come to the heavenly rest, and have not accomplished our spiritual warfare, but, like the disciples here mentioned, must descend from the height of these devout contemplations, to behold and to bear many trials and temptations from an evil world, and from the evil one. Let us duly keep in mind that we must prepare to suffer with our Lord, that we may finally reign with him, and be daily sanctified by his truth, that we may be made meet for his presence. Let us observe, also, that we are not called to be telling every one of our heavenly visions, as if aiming after the pre-eminence over our brethren, but are instructed by our Lord to walk before him in all humility of spirit, even as 'a little child that is weaned of his mother.' Let us remember, above all, that it is only to the good and faithful servant that he will at last be heard to say, 'enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,' and learn, therefore, to follow him as our Lord, in all the duties to which he may call us, without wavering or wearying in his service. Let us neither linger nor look back in our Christian course, but be ready, as he was, to despise every shame and to endure every cross for the joy set before us, when 'he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired of all them that believe, in that day.'

PRAYER.

O almighty and ever blessed God, we adore and worship thee as the great Father of lights, from whom alone cometh down every good and every perfect gift. We bless thy great and holy name for all thy good gifts to us from day to day, and, above all, for thine unspeakable gift, Jesus Christ the righteous. We give thanks to thee, O our God, who in time past didst speak unto men by the prophets, that, in these latter days, thou hast spoken unto us by thine own Son, the appointed heir of all things, and that thou art

in him reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. We rejoice, O Lord, to know that we have in him a merciful and faithful high priest, who hath suffered for us, the just for the unjust, and who ever liveth to make intercession for us. Help us to welcome him as our Redeemer, as thou hast graciously provided; and grant us an interest in all his heavenly blessings. Grant us, for his sake, the forgiveness of all our sins, and peace with thee, our God, at all times, and patience and perseverance in thy fear to the end of our lives. Help us to be daily learning of him who was meek and lowly in heart, and to be so growing in his likeness, as that we may finally be made meet for his presence. Help us, under the influence of this blessed hope, to bear patiently all the trials of the present time, and to serve thee, the Lord, with all humility of mind and fervency of spirit. Help us to glorify thee, our heavenly Father, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, in all the duties which belong to us in our respective places and relations. And, when we shall have answered thy purposes with us here on earth, may we be prepared, by thy grace, for seeing our Lord as he is, beholding his glory and partaking of his joy. We give thanks and praise, O Lord, for the mercies of the day that is past. We pray for thy gracious protection during the returning hours of rest. May we lie down in peace, and sleep in safety, and rise in health, thou, the Lord, sustaining us. May thy blessing rest upon our respective relations and friends every where. May they be taken under thy care at all times. May they be kept in thy fear in all their ways. May they be blessed with thy favour, which is better than life. May they be made meet at length for joining the spirits of just men made perfect, in thy presence. May all flesh see thy salvation, and the whole earth be filled with thy glory. May these, the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts, be accepted by thee, through Jesus Christ, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

FOURTEENTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XL. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS XLI. XLII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

To those who are poor in regard to this world's goods, and exposed to the neglect or unkindness of their fellow-men, it is no small consolation to reflect

and to be able to rejoice, that the blessed God himself condescends to consider their case, and commends them to the compassionate care of their brethren. But it is their best and never-failing consolation to know, that while feeling the want of earthly treasures, they are specially invited to make their application to the compassionate Saviour himself, who calls the poor of this world to seek a portion of his unsearchable riches, and who promises to all who trust in his grace, that he will 'set them on high before his face for ever.' Well may the poorest among men, when once brought to the knowledge and the hope of this eternal inheritance and heavenly consolation, be encouraged to 'bless the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting and to everlasting.'

But to the spiritual mind there is a sense of want, a thirsting, and hungering, which is not less important, than the natural craving of the bodily appetite, for its natural food. When long shut out by distance or distress from the offices of God's worship, and the ordinances of his grace, the pious soul thirsteth and panteth for the living God, and watches and prays for opportunities of drawing near to his gracious presence, and experiencing the communications of his favour. There is a natural feeling of attachment to the place where the multitudes of his people resort to seek his face, and a rational hope of his blessing on the means of his own appointment. But the consolations of genuine piety and humble faith, are not confined to times or places of worship. From every corner of the earth, the most removed from earthly sanctuaries, and the most unsuited for devout exercises; from beds of sickness, from dungeons of darkness, from the howling wilderness, from the swelling deep; from every spot, and at every moment, there is a straight path to the throne of grace, and a free opening for the shining of God's countenance, upon the inmost spirit of the humble suppliant; and never should the souls of his people be so cast down, as to be disquieted with the apprehension, that he hath forgotten to be gracious, or to despair of having yet cause to praise him for his mercies.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Do we enter, in any measure, into those feelings of the devout king of Israel, and esteem it to be at once our duty and happiness to cherish such desires after the living God, and to feel such longings for the place where his honour dwelleth? Do we make it in truth a matter of conscience to wait habitually upon God in his house of prayer, and account our personal attendance there as an act of outward homage which we are invariably bound to render to his glorious name? Do we acknowledge, in this act, the sovereign authority of Jehovah, and the sacred law of the sabbath, requiring us to assemble ourselves together in his name, not merely as a dictate of enlightened reason, or as a service beneficial to society, but as a positive duty, which God himself hath expressly enjoined, and which we cannot deliberately withhold, without directly defying his authority, and defrauding him of his claims? Do we experience, also, a spiritual enjoyment in the discharge of this duty, delighting, like the psalmist, to

seek communion with the Father of our spirits, and to find a sense of peace in the assurance of his favour? The duty indeed, of worshipping God in public, let us observe, depends not upon our will and pleasure, and arises not from the satisfactions which we may experience in the service; but if we do indeed feel any of that delight, which, as God's creatures, and subjects, and servants, and children, it becomes us to take in giving glory to his name, then will it be no easy matter to keep us from following this our own pleasure; then will it be our inclination to break through the hinderances in the way; then will it be clearly seen, that we esteem a day in his courts better than a thousand; then will it be our settled principle, and certain practice, to 'come and appear before God,' not on one Lord's day, or another Lord's day, but on every Lord's day that rises to us in this world, and especially on this present Lord's day, which, for any thing that we can know, may be the last of our allotted number upon earth.

PRAYER.

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive all honour, and blessing, and praise; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. Thou, O Lord, hast made us, and not we ourselves; thou hast hitherto upheld our souls in life, and provided us with all things pertaining unto life and godliness. We bless and praise thy holy name that thou hast brought us to the light of another day of the Son of man in peace, and blessed us with so many means and opportunities of growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We would welcome him as our merciful high priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and who, amidst all the trials and changes of time, remains to us the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We would joy in thee, our God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement. Blessed be he who cometh in the name of the Lord to save us. May we be in the Spirit on this thy day; and be enabled duly to keep thy sabbaths, and to reverence thy sanctuaries. May we be glad always when it is said to us, Let us go up to the house of the Lord; and may we be enabled to worship thee, who art a spirit, in spirit and in truth, as thou desirest to be worshipped. We beseech thee, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, to shine in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of thee, our God, in the face of Jesus Christ. May we be filled with the knowledge of thy will through him, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. And may we walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work. May we be comforted by the consideration of his power and willingness to save; and may we taste the peace of them that love thy law. Be merciful

unto us, O Lord, and heal our souls, for we have sinned against thee. Command thy loving-kindness in the day-time; and in the night may our song be unto thee, and our prayer unto the God of our life. May we taste, this day, the blessedness of the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto thee. May we be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. May thy word have free course and be glorified. May thy priests be clothed with salvation, and thy saints shout aloud for joy. May all thy churches be multiplied and edified, walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. And may the period promised in thy word be hastened, when all shall know thee, from the least unto the greatest, and all the kingdoms of this world shall be made the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ. Do for us, O Lord, above all that we ask or think; and all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLIII. 3.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS XLIII. XLIV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

When deprived of religious ordinances, or denied the consolations which flow from them, the believing soul cannot fail to be cast down; and the more so, in proportion as he has learned to value such privileges, and to delight in such communications. But it is possible to indulge these regrets so far as to lose all relish for other sources of comfort which God is still pleased to place within our reach, and it is more becoming in all who know the loving-kindness of the Lord, to strive, with the psalmist, to reason themselves into a better frame of spirit. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' We must feel our distresses that we may draw good from our chastenings, but must never give way to despair, which is just going quite away from God, and 'dealing falsely in his covenant.' It would argue a want of all pious affections not to feel deeply the loss of spiritual privileges and satisfactions; but this very sense of sorrow, under such privations, should of itself serve as a proof that God hath not 'taken his Holy Spirit away from us,' and should preserve us in the hope that he will yet restore to us the joy of his salvation. Every true believer must have received tokens of the divine goodness which it should be impossible for him to forget, and must have learned to trust in promises which cannot fail to be fulfilled. Whether, then, looking back to things past, or forward to things future, he must see cause to retain his confidence in God, and, from what he hath done 'in times of old,' to rest assured that he will 'command deliverances' in times to come. Just

because his soul is 'disquieted within him,' may he be satisfied that the Spirit of God is working within him new convictions of his own insufficiency and emptiness, and so preparing him yet to go unto God with exceeding joy, and to praise him for ever as 'the health of his countenance,' and the 'God of his salvation.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

With all the consolations which we can expect to possess in this mortal and mixed state, we must indeed remember, at all times, that this is not our rest, and must never remain satisfied with any portion of spiritual enjoyment, but should be looking and preparing daily for our passage from an earthly to a heavenly temple, to join the worship of angels through eternal ages. Let us carefully cherish this desire, and continually rejoice in this hope. Let us be thankful for every intimation of pardoning mercy, and every experience of purifying grace; and pray always, in humble confidence, that he 'who hath begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' Let us beware of indulging a selfish rather than a saint-like spirit, in complaining of our depressions and desertions; and rather learn to rest satisfied, with child-like reliance, that it is best for us, in all things, to be as the Lord pleases, whether in the way of temporal prosperity or of spiritual consolation. In both these respects, let us be duly careful to use the appointed means of success, in humble dependence on his blessing, and in patient waiting for his pleasure; and let us no more doubt his faithfulness than we would question that of a well-tried earthly friend, though we may not receive all the intimations of his remembrance and tokens of his regard that we may desire. 'Though now for a season, if need be, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations, let us greatly rejoice even in this as the trial of our faith, that it might be found unto peace, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ;' and make it our prayer, without ceasing, in the words of the psalmist, 'O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill.'

PRAYER.

We would now desire, most gracious God, to lift our souls to thee in prayer. We beseech thee, for the Redeemer's sake, to hear us in mercy, and to grant us an answer of peace. We bless thy great and holy name for all the goodness and mercy which thou art daily making to pass before us in this present life, and for the blessed hope of a heavenly inheritance beyond the grave. We give thanks, O Lord, for the opportunities this day afforded us of worshipping thee in thine earthly courts, and receiving instructions and consolations from thy word of truth. We are not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast shown us. We confess before thee, the great Searcher of hearts, that in us there dwelleth no good thing, and that if thou wert strict to mark iniquity, we could

not answer thee for one out of many thousands of our offences. Have mercy upon us, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out all our transgressions. Being justified by faith, may we have peace with thee, our God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and as he who hath called us is holy, so may we also learn to be holy in all manner of conversation. May it be given unto us to know the love of Christ our Lord, which passeth knowledge; and may we walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us. May we hold on our Christian course rejoicing, and be found steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead us; let them bring us to thy holy hill and heavenly presence. By all our approaches to thee in thine earthly courts, may our spirits be finally prepared for serving thee hereafter, without sin and without end, in a heavenly temple. Be gracious to all with whom thou hast connected us in this passing life. Remember them with that favour which thou bearest to thy people. O thou keeper of Israel, who neither sleepest nor sleepest, watch over us during the hours of rest. May we remember thee upon our bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. May we be daily looking and preparing for that rest which remaineth for thy people. May we wait patiently all the days of our appointed time, and be enabled to depart in peace, having seen thy salvation. Hear us, O Lord, and accept of us, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 7—10.

SCRIPTURE—DEUTERONOMY XXVII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—10. The necessity of obeying the law is here enforced. We are by no means set free from obedience, because we have disqualified ourselves for obeying. On the contrary, our very disqualification is our sin. So much are we bound to obey, that in all our undertakings we should keep God's law 'very plainly' before us as a rule of life. Ver. 2—6. Moreover, we are to set up an altar for God's worship wherever we are. Ver. 7. Burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, all pointing to Jesus Christ, the sinner's 'peace,' are to be offered before we can rejoice in the Lord our God. Though God is called 'love,' and though he gave his Son to die for his people, yet he will by no means clear the guilty. Every law and appointment of God must be obeyed, or the lawgiver is angry with the sinner. God is

infinitely merciful, but he is also infinitely pure. Ver. 15—26. Hence, the chain of curses pronounced in this chapter, will eternally fetter those who live and die sinners, without being guided to him who is the end of the law for righteousness.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

As the injunction is to keep all God's commandments, and as conscience accuses us of having broken them all, surely this should urge us to seek, with a zeal that increases every day, the Lord Jesus, in whom all sin is pardoned, and believers are complete for justification. Col. ii. 10. As God insists, with so much reiteration, on our obedience to the law, this should show both the sinfulness of sin, and the need of atoning, cleansing blood, without which there can be no pardon. And as God, in this chapter, commands the people so strongly to adopt measures for keeping them in mind of all the law, we may learn from this that God wishes us constantly to walk by its directions, not that we may be justified thereby, because that would be to overthrow the gospel, but that, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, we may learn to be perfect, as God is perfect, and pure, as Christ is pure. To know the right use of God's law is one sure mark of a true Christian. When we are taught by the Holy Ghost to use the law always as a guide, but never as a saviour, we understand the gospel, and enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ maketh free. Farther, as God commands his people to set up an altar for his worship, ought not every head of a family to set up an altar in his house, and every professing Christian to erect one in his heart, that all we do may be hallowed by holy communion with God. The altar was to be made of unpolished stones. This may show that God is to be worshipped, not by the inventions of man, or the elegance of mere earth-born accomplishments, but in simplicity and godly sincerity of heart. To the curses contained in this chapter, which apply to secret as well as open sins, the people of God are expected to add their Amen, that is, we should be ready to condemn ourselves as sinners against God; to plead guilty when a holy God accuses. The man who is most prompt and most spiritual in self-condemning, is the man that is most according to God's own heart. But self-condemnation should always send us in faith to him in whom there is no condemnation for his people. Rom. viii. 1.

When reading the curses here denounced against sinners, even God's covenant people sometimes feel dismayed. But they find shelter from him who became a curse for them. Gal. iii. 13. This is the substance of that marvellous scheme by which even the Holy God is now in Christ the friend of penitent sinners. The fire of the curse is quenched in the blood of the Redeemer; and the love of God, the love of Christ, the ingratitude of man, should be equally wondrous in our eyes. Since these appalling curses are designed to bring us to Christ, for the law is a schoolmaster, appointed for that purpose, how miserable is the man who is equally unmoved by God's love, and unwarned by God's anathema! O my soul, is it even possible that this may be thy condition?

PRAYER.

O holy, just, and sovereign God, in thy law we desire to see the reflection of all thy perfections. We would be impressed in our inmost souls with this conviction, that sinners like us cannot approach a God like thee, and live before thee. Thy commandments we have broken; thy law we have despised; and though thou hast, in mercy to our souls, warned us of the danger of sin, yet have we, O living God, neglected thy warnings, and turned a deaf ear even to thine entreaties. God be merciful to us sinners. Turn us, that we may be turned. May the eternal Spirit convince us of sin, according to the promise; and bring us to the Lord Jesus, who, in his people's stead, magnified the law and made it honourable; fulfilled all righteousness; made an end of transgression; and shed the blood which cleanseth from all sin. O God of mercy, grant that by a vital and a spiritual union to the Lord Jesus, we may be complete in him. Being guilty, and polluted, and vile in ourselves, O take away our pollution, through the blood which at once atoneth for sin and cleanseth from it. As thou didst give thy Son to be a curse for thy people, give us precious faith in him, that from his death we may derive life; that from his sufferings we may obtain joy; and that, since he bore the curse, we may obtain mercy to pardon. While we beseech thee, O God of mercy, thus to pardon and bless us, we would adore thee for our temporal mercies as well as our spiritual blessings. We thank thee for the preservation of the past night; for the health and the comforts of this morning. Grant that, under the guidance of thy Spirit, we may this day act in spirit and in truth, like the people of thee, the Lord. Amid our intercourse with the world, teach us to remember that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Help us, therefore, to set the Lord before us. May thy Son be precious to us. May thy Spirit dwell in us. May holiness to the Lord be inscribed on our hearts. May sin be pardoned; and may thy glory thus be promoted in the salvation of our souls, through Jehovah our righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 5—8.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE X. 1—24.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 2. Moved by the extent of the unconverted world, Jesus Christ sends forth some labourers to seek its conversion, and bids us pray to the Father

to raise up others. Hence prayers for ministers and missionaries is a doctrine taught by Jesus Christ, however much neglected by those who call themselves Christians. Ver. 3, 4. Ministers and missionaries should now go forth to their work, depending on God's providence, not in the way of miracle, but in the use of means. Ver. 5, 6. They should make it their first aim to proclaim peace between heaven and earth, in God's appointed way, that is, through Christ's blood believed in. Ver. 6—9. While the word of the kingdom, that is, the gospel, is received, ministers and missionaries are to labour; ver. 10—15. but circumstances may arise in which the servants of Christ should abandon the field in which the Lord of the harvest placed them, when the Lord himself leads the way. Ver. 16. What ministers say, agreeably to the mind of the Spirit in the scriptures, is stamped with the authority of Jesus Christ, ver. 17—20. and when the Lord works with them, great success will follow. As the Lord Jesus is the Saviour, so he is the model for his people to imitate. Accordingly, in ver. 21, 22. he sets us the example of holding communion with God. Ver. 23, 24. Lastly, the Redeemer draws the attention of the disciples to the privilege they enjoyed in waiting upon the Son of God while he dwelt on earth, to labour and die for the redemption of his people.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Since there are still so many millions of unconverted men, Christ's people should be frequently in prayer to the Lord of the harvest to raise up and prepare missionaries for the work. We ought also to beseech God to make ministers and missionaries faithful and assiduous; instant in season and out of season, and to teach them not to conform to the world's hollow formalities. And seeing that God hath in sovereignty sent the gospel to us, O how careful should we be, lest the doom pronounced over Chorazin and Bethsaida be uttered over us at the day of judgment! If our privileges be high, our condemnation will be great, if they are abused; and we should never forget that God's word, however weak the minister may be, is stamped with God's authority. To obey is to obey Christ, to despise is to despise Christ, when what is said agrees with the mind of the Spirit in the Bible; and surely it might make the ears to tingle to hear of despising and rejecting Christ. Let every conscience, then, ask in the sight of God, and as it shall answer to God, Am I honouring Christ's word?

When the Lord Jesus Christ, in his providence, sends forth ministers or missionaries, we may be sure he will bless them and equip them for the work, insomuch that in Christ's own time satan shall fall from heaven, that is, he shall be brought down from his dominion by the 'stronger than he' that is in the Christian. At the same time, the Lord Jesus, like a true spiritual teacher, turned men's thoughts away from miraculous gifts to spiritual graces, and taught that men should rejoice supremely in the fact that they are heirs of God. To have our own names written in the book of life should be our first endeavour, and even ministers choose a wretched portion, when they professionally seek the conversion

of others but neglect their own. As Jesus Christ rejoiced in the success of his servants, and thanked the sovereign God for disclosing the truth to simple minded believers, so Christians should rejoice when another and another are added to the number of Christ's Spirit-taught people. While we rejoice that all the events, both of the world and the church, are controlled by a sovereign God, we should also rejoice that all is now in the hands of a mediator, and if we indeed see light in Christ's light, whereas millions, not worse by nature than we, are left in darkness, we ought to ascribe blessing, and honour, and glory to him who, by his Holy Spirit, hath opened our eyes to see the Lord's salvation.

PRAYER.

O thou who art light, and in whom is no darkness at all, we would praise and magnify thy name for thy sovereign goodness towards us, in sending the knowledge of thy Son to these distant isles of the sea. We adore thee for this, that poor, and miserable, and wretched as we are by nature, thou hast in Christ Jesus made provision for restoring us to thy favour, by blotting out our sins. And since thou hast brought to our knowledge the plan of redemption, and permitted us to learn it by the hearing of the ear, O living God, complete thy mercy, by enabling us, through thy grace and Spirit, to believe with the heart to the saving of the soul. May Jesus Christ be in us, by his Spirit, the hope of glory. May we be taught to live by faith on the Son of God. May the kingdom of God be within us—that kingdom which consists in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Our heart's desire and prayer, O God, is, that we may have in us the mind of Christ, and be before thee, even as he is, through faith in his name as the Prince of peace. And blessed God, hear our prayers, while we beseech thee to spread the savour of that name throughout the world. May thy church, through all its borders, soon become a missionary church, even till, by the unction of the Holy Ghost, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess at the name of Jesus. May thy ministering servants be full of the Holy Ghost. May they be taught to glory only in the Lord, and to know nothing but Christ and him crucified. While we beseech thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, to sanctify us in the use of all our privileges, we would also thank thee for the happiness and the protection of another day. Forgive the sins we have committed in its course. Sprinkle us with the blood of cleansing, and speak peace unto us. Prepare us for death, judgment, and eternity. Take us under thy guardianship for this night. May no evil thing befall us; may no plague come near our dwelling. Grant refreshing repose.

Prepare us for all our duties. And in Christ Jesus be our everlasting portion, for thy great name's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXX. 3—6.

SCRIPTURE—DEUTERONOMY XXVIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

We are here taught, that in keeping God's commandments, not in a legal, but an evangelical spirit, there is a great reward. To disobey God is to be cursed, to obey him is to be blessed; when obedience flows from proper motives, in public and in private, God meets his people to bless them, and to do them good, when they delight in the law of the Lord after the inner man; on the other hand, God makes every thing in reality, fight against men, when they rebel, and continue rebellious against him.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The Spirit of God, who dictated this chapter, and the whole word of God, saw the end from the beginning, and called things that were not, as though they had been. Accordingly all took place, exactly as this passage of the word describes. The Jews prospered and grew exceedingly, when they obeyed their covenant God. But calamity followed calamity, when they forsook the holy One of Israel. Drought and blasting overtook them as threatened. Again and again, did their enemies carry them into captivity. Their bones have been bleached on many occasions, by the sun and rain of heaven. They have been oppressed and spoiled in every land. Their property has been seized on, by kings and rulers, and scarce anywhere more than in this island, in ancient times. In some popish countries, the children of Jews have been torn from their parents, and trained up as papists. Many of them have been compelled to feign conversion, to escape from the inquisition. Every one is aware, that the name of a Jew is a name of contempt, at least with unthinking men, in every land. Verily, a 'yoke of iron, hath been put upon the neck of the nation,' by the God who shall come, and will not tarry, whether he come to bless his people, or destroy his enemies. Even the horrific prediction, or threat, in ver. 56, 57. was literally fulfilled in more than one instance. In short, because the Jews did not fear the great and terrible name of the Lord their God, afflictions without an equal befell them. They are found in every land, yet have a home in none. Wherever they are, they are black with the curse of Jehovah; and the marvel is, that, amid all their sufferings, they continue uncrushed, and separate from every other people; a perpetual miracle pressed on the attention of the church, confirming at once the truth of the Christian religion, the misery that attends rebellion against God, and the guilt of crucifying the Lord of glory.

While contemplating the tremendous calamities of the Jews, we ought to remember, that great as they

were, they are but the small dust in the balance, compared with the misery which awaits God's enemies, in the world beyond the grave. The professing Christian may fear, lest his privileges, so much higher than those of the Jews, rise up to witness against him at the bar of God; and as many as believe may rejoice in spirit, because the Son of God hath abolished death, and all its terrors, that the curse may have no power over God's children. He fell into the hands of an angry God, that his people might find God, in Christ, reconciled to them for ever. These things should encourage and allure us, to commit ourselves in soul and body, to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; while the possibility and danger of crucifying Christ afresh, should teach us to walk tenderly in spirit, before the Lord our God. 'His blood be on us, and on our children!' How terrific are the effects of that imprecation in time, how doubly terrific in eternity! Therefore, should this be written on our door-posts and lintels; 'thou shalt fear this glorious and fearful name, The Lord thy God.'

PRAYER.

O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, through the power of thy grace, dispose us now to come into thy presence, as children drawing nigh to a parent that loves them. May thy free Spirit endue us with the spirit of adoption, and deliver us from the spirit of bondage. Through Jesus Christ, the first-born of many brethren, teach us to rejoice in our privileges, to hold communion with thee, the Father, and thy Son Christ Jesus. Forbid, O God, that we should ever find peace in any creature apart from thee, the Creator. But fill our souls with the enjoyment of thee, in Christ, even till we be raised to the rank from which sin thrust us down, and enabled to walk in spirit with thee, like two who are agreed. This morning, O Lord our God, would we adore thee, for the teaching of thy blessed word, and beseech thee to accompany it with the teaching of thy Holy Spirit. Open our understandings, to understand it; our hearts to receive its truth, and give us grace to practise it in our lives, to rejoice in thy promises, and tremble at thy rebuke. We entreat thee, O just and sovereign God, to arise and have mercy on thine ancient people. Father, in thine own time, elect from among them, and bring in the remnant of Israel, with the fulness of the Gentiles. And seeing, O God of mercy, that our privileges are so high, forbid that they should ever be abused, or rise up in memorial against us, when we stand before thee our God. Again, do we bless and adore thee, for the repose of another night, the renewed mercies of another day. Teach us to use all as not abusing it. May thy Holy Spirit be with us this day. Go, O God, as a pillar of cloud before us; and teach us, amid all our gettings, to

get knowledge of thee, through him who is the way, and the truth, and the life. Hear us in this our prayer; pardon us our transgressions, through the blood that speaketh peace, sanctify us wholly, and the glory shall be unto the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CIII. 8—12.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE x. 25—42.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 26—28. 'By the law is the knowledge of sin,' and Christ here teaches, that, by the deeds of the law, shall no flesh living be justified. This was the method, indirectly adopted, by which Jesus tried to convince the lawyer of sin. Ver. 29. But even Jesus Christ's teaching does not produce conviction without the Holy Ghost, for the lawyer began to excuse himself. Ver. 31, 32. We are farther taught that an unfeeling heart may be concealed beneath a religious profession. Ver. 33—37. Those whom we most despise, as the Jews did the Samaritans, may be of more service in trial, than those in whom we confide. The chief design of the Saviour in this parable, appears to have been to exhibit the searching spirituality of the law of God; and to convince the lawyer that his fancied obedience was a delusion. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' This is the demand of the law of God; and were we to be tried by this standard, as unbelievers will be, not one could stand. Ver. 38—42. Lastly, this doctrine is strongly urged on our attention, that we should seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

This passage of God's word exhibits to us clearly man's natural ignorance of the true way to favour with God. It is to man, like the breath of life, to desire to be his own saviour; to work for, and win heaven, rather than believe and live. But Christ meets such a sinner on his own ground, and tries him by his own standard. 'Be perfectly holy, keep the law in every jot and tittle, and then expect heaven for your doings.' But the lawyer evaded the point, and began to adopt measures for justifying himself; unconscious of his short-comings towards God and man, he tried to escape by starting a difficulty. And this is still the mode pursued by men who will not be convinced of sin. Difficulties are referred to, and questions asked, if possible to parry the thrust of that word which is sharper than a two-edged sword. Though full of Jewish prejudices, this lawyer was at perfect peace in his own mind concerning God's law; though one of the leading characteristics of that law, namely, benevolence to our fellow-men, was not comprehended by him. But Jesus Christ attempted to teach him, and through him, the Saviour teaches us the expansive nature of

Christian charity. Neighbourhood is not limited by place or part, as it was among the Jews; but, according to Christ's teaching, benevolence towards all should link all together. Some may be neighbours in the letter, and enemies in the spirit, and the law of God at once detects their character.

This parable is capable of many different applications, and among others, it has been viewed as teaching, that while the character of the priest and levite exhibits the miserable want of true benevolence, which distinguishes many professors of religion, the character of the good Samaritan exhibits the tenderness and the loving-kindness of God our Saviour, who submitted to so many hardships, and such a death, for his very enemies.

Farther, we are taught in this passage, ver. 38—42. that sitting at the feet of Christ, to learn from him as his Spirit teacheth, should be the governing object of our lives. Worldly cares may interpose between Christ and us; but they never do so without injuring and endangering the soul, whatever plausible pretences we may plead for our worldliness. The activities of our men of business, and of merchandize, the cares of our farmers and artisans, are apt to entice them away from Christ, unless the grace of God be their guardian; and he accordingly teaches, that an interest in Christ, attachment to him, dependence on him for comfort, pardon, righteousness, life, and every thing, form the highest happiness of man on earth. One thing is absolutely needful, an interest in Christ; but that one thing is all. (Col. iii. 11. last clause.) Since the Bible makes this so plain, it should be the desire, and by God's grace, the resolution, of our hearts, to 'wait on the Lord;' and 'rejoice in him always.'

PRAYER.

O God, whilst we magnify and extol thy name together, for what thou art in thyself, glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises, we would magnify thee especially for what thou art in Christ Jesus, to the lost children of men—the God that delighteth to pardon, unto whom judgment is a strange work. Praise waiteth for thee in Zion, because thou art, in Christ Jesus, reconciling sinners to thyself; and O grant, that we may be of the number of those who are thus brought nigh unto thee, through the blood of Christ's cross. Teach us, O God, to sit down in spirit at the foot of the cross. May we there find Christ to be the wisdom of God, and the power of God, all our salvation, and all our desire. Breathe upon our dead souls, by thy quickening Spirit. Thereby unite us to the Lord Jesus, even till we be members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; out of his fulness may we all receive. May his love constrain us to love him, and all who belong to the household of faith. Impress our hearts with the conviction that one thing is needful, even an interest in Christ. O grant unto us, even unto us, such an interest, that we may know the blessedness

of him whose sins are forgiven, whose iniquities are covered, and who lives by faith upon the Son of God. Teach us to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Deliver us from this world's delusions and vanities, and teach us that he that is not for Christ, is against Christ; he that gathereth not with Christ, scattereth abroad. Be near, O God, unto those who are in sickness, in danger, or near to death; may Christ be magnified in their deliverance. Be merciful to us, O God, through Christ our covenant head, for the sins of this day. We have done little for thee, we have thought little of thee; but Lord remember mercy. Take away all our iniquity. Blot out our transgressions like a cloud. Spread over us thy protection for the night that has closed around us; and ere we resign ourselves to sleep, O God, grant that our peace may be made with thee, and with our own consciences, through the blood of atonement. Our hopes, O Lord, rest on thee, thou Shepherd of Israel. Watch over us and all ours; bless us, provide for us, pardon us, make us thine in soul and in body, for ever and ever, through the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXV. 12.

SCRIPTURE—DEUTERONOMY XXIX.

REMARKS.

In this chapter we have a striking illustration of the necessity of divine teaching, before any serious and saving impression is made on the human heart. The children of Israel, at the period of their history which is here referred to, had, as we have already seen, many signal tokens of the providential care of Jehovah. And yet, so far was the goodness of the Lord, so signally manifested in their behalf, from leading them to repentance, that we find Moses uttering this pathetic lamentation, 'The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.' He therefore recounts, for their conviction, many instances of God's unmerited kindness to them, exhorts them to 'keep the covenant,' into which they had already entered, and which he was about, with their consent, to ratify. He prohibits idolatry, and every species of superstition, upon pain of being visited with all the threatened curses. But alas! these wise and salutary regulations proved too feeble a check to the strange propensity of that people to the sin of idolatry.

In this chapter, also, we see how the perverse and deeply depraved heart of man will pursue its unhal- lowed gratifications in the midst of the richest and purest means of grace; and how, with daring pre-

sumption, it will anticipate impunity, while it revels in flagrant iniquity. But Jehovah is a jealous and sin-avenging God, and 'will not spare' the transgressor who flatters himself that he shall escape the vengeance of his insulted Maker. All the curses of the law, we may rest assured, will overtake the man who walks in the imagination of his own depraved heart, 'adding drunkenness to thirst.' Here also we learn that God brings visible and palpable judgments on nations, as the punishment of national sins. And while we are taught this deeply affecting truth, we behold, at the same time, a demonstration of the truth of God's word; for the fact here referred to is announced in the way of prophecy, and we see the fulfilment of the prediction at this day, in the bleak and barren aspect of the land of Judea, which was once proverbial for its fertility; and in the present dispersed state of the Jews, who were once a united and flourishing people. We find the infidel Volney, in astonishing fulfilment of the passage before us, asking these questions: 'Great God! From whence proceed so melancholy revolutions? For what cause is the fortune of these countries so strikingly changed? Why are so many cities destroyed? Why is not that ancient population reproduced?' Thus a most disinterested spectator asked with amazement, in almost the very words of inspiration. But, blinded by unbelief, he knew not the answer which was recorded, side by side with the prediction in this chapter.

The chapter closes with two lessons of the greatest value; that we are not, with presumptuous curiosity, to pry into those things which God has not revealed to us; and that the wide field of inspired revelation lies before us, as a rich and unperishable portion for ourselves and for our children. God has revealed, in the plainest and most explicit manner, all that is needful for our salvation, and for our present guidance, peace, consolation, and spiritual joy. But many of his ways are, to human observation, wrapt in obscurity. 'He giveth not account of any of his matters.' He will teach us that we are but children, and that we must often take his bare word without explanation, or endure the severe trial in the course of providence, without asking why. 'Be still, and know that I am God,' is frequently all the information that we obtain in days of darkness and perplexity, and to the believer this is sufficient; for well does he know that 'the Judge of all the earth doeth right.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou hast been the dwelling-place of thy people in all generations. Thou hast guided and sustained them during their earthly pilgrimage, and hast ever proved thyself to be a very present help in the time of their trouble. We behold the most instructive and encouraging proofs of thy mercy, thy power, and thy faithfulness in thy dealings towards thy chosen people. Thou didst bring them forth from the house of bondage, in the presence of their enemies, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm. Thou

didst divide the waters of the sea before them, and didst lead them through the wilderness, under the visible symbols of thy presence. Thou didst feed them with manna from heaven, and didst satisfy their thirst with water from the rock. And thou didst enter into covenant with them, to be a God to them and to their seed. But alas! how depraved, and how deceitful is the human heart! How soon did thine ancient people forsake thy holy law, and violate their most solemn engagement; 'all that the Lord hath spoken, will we do.' And how vainly did they expect impunity, whilst they gave themselves over to sensual indulgences! May we take warning from their unfaithfulness, and from their doom. And when we contemplate the land of promise, now lying in desolation, and the posterity of its rightful possessors scattered to the four winds of heaven, O may we fear lest, by our abuse of still richer privileges, we be condemned to the flames of everlasting burnings. O help us, by thy grace, to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life. And having named the name of Christ, may we depart from all iniquity, and abound more and more in the fruits of righteousness, to the glory of redeeming love. O help us to rejoice in the fulness and sufficiency of thy holy word. May we ever seek, under the gracious teaching of thy blessed Spirit, to know its meaning, and to feel its sanctifying power. May it thus be effectual in enlightening our minds in the knowledge of thyself, and of thy Son Jesus Christ. May it ever dwell in us richly in all wisdom. May it render us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus, and furnish us thoroughly unto all good works. May it ever be the ground of our faith, the rule of our conduct, and the source of our sweetest consolation. May it be our counsellor in the day time, and our song in the night watches; and may its faithful promises soothe our spirits on the bed of death. And valuing thy word ourselves, may we ever long for the happy time when it shall be imparted, in all its extent and purity, to every nation under heaven. May our friends and connections know 'the joyful sound,' and walk at all times in the light of thy countenance. And may they and we at last meet together in our Father's house, beyond the reach of sorrow or of death. Be present with the sons and daughters of affliction, and when their troubles abound, may thy consolations, through Christ Jesus, much more abound. And now, holy Father, we commend ourselves to thee, and to the guidance of thy good Spirit. Be with us this day to direct us in all our duties,

and to sustain us under all our trials. And do thou hear us, and accept of us, and bless us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRaise—PARAPHRASE XLVIII.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XI. 1—28.

REMARKS.

Here we behold the value of a pious example. Jesus was frequent and fervent in prayer, and his disciples caught the sacred flame of devotion; but, like all who attempt to pray in earnest, soon felt that they could not pray aright. With the greatest propriety therefore, they applied to Jesus for instruction in this delightful and improving exercise. And in recording this circumstance, the sacred writer gives us an incidental notice of the admirable character of John the Baptist. He was himself a man of prayer, and he taught his disciples to pray. Let parents and teachers attend to this fact, and be careful to improve it in their intercourse with the young. No sooner was the request of the disciples presented to Jesus, than he cheerfully complied with it, and furnished them with a form of prayer, at once brief and comprehensive; so simple that it does not go beyond the understanding of a child, and so full of meaning that, in the opinion of many competent judges, it includes the substance of almost all the petitions which it becomes us to address to our Maker. It is almost unnecessary to notice, what seems to be self-evident, that Jesus intended this prayer rather as a model, the spirit of which is to be followed in our addresses to the throne of grace, than as a set form, the exact words of which are to be habitually repeated. See Matt. vi. 9. Our Lord having prescribed a model of prayer, proceeds to encourage us to pray, from the animating consideration that we shall not do so in vain. This argument is founded on the goodness and placability of the divine nature. Even a man of an unfeeling heart will be overcome with the importunity of a neighbour, unseasonable as his intrusion may be; and will God be more hard-hearted than his own like creature? An earthly parent, capricious and passionate as he may be, will not refuse the reasonable request of his child; and will God, who is infinitely good and gracious, reject the prayer of the humble suppliant? No indeed. And this fact, and as a fact full of comfort to the downcast Christian, is here set before us in a form the most striking and convincing that can be conceived. By appealing to one of the strongest and most invariable principles of our nature—the instructive love of a parent to his offspring—he puts the case in the strongest possible light. ‘If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?’ Observe what is promised; the Holy Spirit. And this gift is doubtless intended in this case to include all spiritual bless-

ings. Obtain the gift of the Holy Spirit, and with him you obtain all the grace that is needful for you in your present circumstances. And observe also, that the promise is limited to them who ask. And thus the necessity of prayer is strongly enforced. We see how triumphantly Jesus defends himself against the false and ungenerous insinuation, that in casting out unclean spirits he was in league with the prince of devils. How dangerous are the prejudices of the unbelieving heart! They blind the understanding, and pervert the judgment, so that even the most palpable evidence is opposed and rejected. O let us strive to overcome all our prejudices, and let us give the miracles of Jesus a patient and impartial examination, and we shall see in them the clearest proof at once of his divinity and of his Messiahship. How fearful are the consequences of apostasy! The last state of it is worse than the first.

PRAYER.

Our Father who art in heaven, do thou deeply impress our minds when we draw near to the footstool of thy throne of grace, and enable us to realize thy gracious presence. Teach us to come to thee in that new and living way of access which thou hast opened up through Jesus Christ, and give us the spirit of adoption, whereby we may cry unto thee, Abba, Father. Let thy name, thy holy character, and thy adorable perfections be known, revered, and glorified by all thy intelligent offspring. May the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom be speedily and widely extended. May Jesus, the King of Zion, gird his sword on his thigh, and ride forth conquering and to conquer, until all the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. And we earnestly beseech thee, heavenly Father, to give us individually a place in that kingdom, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. May our hearts, and the hearts of all mankind, be brought effectually under the hallowed influence of divine truth; so that thy will may be done in earth, as it is in heaven. And, O Lord, as we are entirely dependent on thee for every breath that we draw, and for every morsel of food that sustains our natural existence, do thou give us day by day, in thy unmerited favour, and for Christ's sake, those temporal mercies which thou seest we need. Feed us with food convenient for us; and may we experience thy covenant love even in partaking of the meat that perisheth. Behold, we have sinned, and what shall we say unto thee, O thou preserver of men? Look upon us in the face of thy dear Son, and for his sake be merciful to our unrighteousness, our sins and iniquities do thou remember no more. Justify us freely by thy grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and sanctify us wholly by the power of thy Holy Spirit. Hav-

ing commenced the Christian career, may we never look back with a carnal affection to the world and its vanities; but may we keep the onward path of new obedience, which leads to the heavenly Zion. We bless thee, gracious Father, for the mercies and privileges of another day. Give us heart-felt gratitude for the numberless benefits which thou art crowding into our lot, and help us to improve them all for the advancement of thy glory, and for our own spiritual improvement. And we humbly implore the sanctified use of the various trials and afflictions with which thou art pleased to visit us in the course of thy holy providence. Deal with us in mercy as with thy redeemed children, causing all things to work together for our good. Teach us ever to live as on the borders of the eternal world. May our lives be hid with Christ in God. And when he who is our life shall appear, may we appear with him in glory. Bless, we pray thee, a preached gospel in our own land; and make it effectual, by thy grace, for the conversion and salvation of all our friends and connections. Visit in mercy the habitations of the afflicted and the dying, and be a very present help to them in the time of trouble. Into thy blessed hands, holy Father, we commend ourselves this night. May we feel ourselves safe and happy under thy protecting wings. And in the morning, if it is thy good pleasure to permit us to see its light, may we be still with thee, and may our first thoughts ascend to thee, the God of our salvation. And when at last our days on earth are numbered, may we go to the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven, and cast our crowns at the feet of Jesus, and sing the praises of redeeming love through all the ages of a joyful eternity. And unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Spirit, one God, be ascribed all honour and glory, dominion and praise, now, and evermore. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXI. 19.

SCRIPTURE—DEUTERONOMY XXX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In the commencement of this chapter, Moses is commissioned to give the most gracious promises to the children of Israel. It is taken for granted, that in consequence of their apostacy the threatenings of the preceding chapter will take effect. But this interruption of the stream of God's mercies to that people would not abolish his covenant with them.

And it is here intimated, that after they had experienced the boundless compassion and fatherly love of Jehovah while they remained faithful to his service, and had drained the vials of his wrath when they abandoned themselves to idolatry and immorality, they should still find a resting-place in the favour of their God, and be restored from all their dispersions to the land of their fathers. These predictions were partially fulfilled in the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. But their highest and most glorious accomplishment is undoubtedly still future, when they shall return to God by faith and repentance. Moses next reminds his hearers that the 'commandment,' the rule of moral duty; or, more generally, the revealed will of God, was not distant and inaccessible, but completely within the reach of all, committed as it now was to writing, and appointed as it was to be regularly read by the priests in the solemn assemblies. The apostle Paul applies this passage in the plainest and most unequivocal way to the method of salvation by Jesus Christ; Rom. x. 4—10. In these verses we have the true key to this passage, and have the brightest and the surest discovery of its evangelical interpretation. Moses now closes his present address to the Israelites in the most affecting and impressive manner, calling heaven and earth to witness that he had faithfully acted the part of God's messenger to them, having impartially set before them 'life and death, blessing and cursing.' And in this closing appeal, he uses at once his authority as a divinely inspired lawgiver, and the tenderness of an affectionate parent, who yearns over his offspring, and longs that they may be led to make the right decision on a matter of vast and eternal importance. 'I command thee to love the Lord thy God, and to walk in his ways.' 'Choose life; that both thou and thy seed may live.' What a touching combination of authority and affection!

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Truly Jehovah is 'long-suffering and slow to wrath.' The blessed truth that he 'waits to be gracious,' receives a striking illustration in his dealings with the Jews. He has indeed for the present cast them out of his church; but he has not cast them off for ever. It was not till the measure of their sins was 'filled up,' in crucifying the Lord of glory and in persecuting his followers, that wrath came on them 'to the uttermost.' And in the mournful period of their dispersion, Jehovah is still waiting to be gracious to them; and will in due time make bare his holy arm for their deliverance and restoration. Let us fervently pray for the speedy arrival of that predicted era, which shall not only usher in the dawn of a glorious revival in the case of the Jews, but which shall prove as 'life from the dead' to the Gentile world. And let us eager improve the day of our own merciful visitation, remembering that to whom much is given, of the shall much be required, and that the shades of that long and silent night of death will soon gather around us; that night in which no man can work. O how signally have we been favoured in having the scriptures in our hands from our childhood! And how plainly is the way of salvation set before us.

the gospel of Jesus! Let us betake ourselves in all our helplessness and vileness to him who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth. Let us give our hearts to Jesus; for he is indeed worthy to reign over us. And when life and death are put in our choice, O let us cast in our lot with the people of God! And may our life of holiness be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

PRAYER.

Who, O Lord, is a God like unto thee, who pardonest iniquity, and passest by the transgression of the remnant of thy heritage, who retainest not thine anger for ever, because thou delightest in mercy! O do thou turn again and have compassion upon us, and cast all our sins into the depth of the sea. Remember us, O Lord, with the favour which thou bearest to thine own, and visit us with thy salvation. Thou hast indeed been good and gracious to us, and hast blessed us with the most distinguished Christian privileges. Thou hast not dealt so with any people as thou hast done with us. Thou hast given us thy precious word in all its extent and purity; and here we are permitted daily to read the wondrous things of God. Thou art permitting us to enjoy peaceful sabbaths and pure gospel ordinances; and in the observance of these we are encouraged to expect the guidance of thy Spirit, and the gracious presence of Jesus our Saviour. Thou hast been plying us from our earliest day, with the promises, the invitations, and the warnings of thy holy word; and thou hast been moving our hearts by the inward operations of thy grace. What more could have been done to melt and win our hearts than thou hast done? But alas! we have remained insensible to all the overtures of thy mercy and love. Thy goodness has not led us to repentance, but we have continued in sin because grace abounds. O enter not into judgment with us. But justify us freely by thy grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. And O may the exceeding greatness of that power by which Christ was raised from the dead be exerted in quickening us from the death of sin, and in raising us to newness of life, even a life of active, consistent, and progressive holiness. May we rise every day to higher attainments in the divine life, until we are rendered meet for the heavenly inheritance. O Lord, look down in compassion on the millions of our race who are still sitting in darkness, and cause the Sun of righteousness to arise and shine upon them with healing in his wings. Remember thy covenant with Abraham, thy friend, and remove the veil of ignorance and

unbelief from the hearts of his descendants. Be thou the God of this family. Bless us with all temporal mercies as thou seest we need: and bless us especially with all spiritual blessings in Christ. We would go forward to the various duties of this day, imploring thy wisdom to direct us, thy strength to uphold us, and thy Spirit to revive and comfort us. And when at last the tie of affection with which we are united, as inhabitants of this world, shall be burst asunder by the strong hand of death, may we meet together in a purer and closer fellowship in heaven. And seeing we know not what a day may bring forth, may we ever be in the attitude of those who are waiting for the coming of their Lord. And when he proclaims to us, Behold, I come quickly; may we be able, without hesitation or alarm, to reply, Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Hear us now, holy Father; and when thou hearest forgive, and accept of us and bless us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXX.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XI. 29—54.

REMARKS.

Jesus, with much emphasis, complains of the Jews as an 'evil generation,' because they refused to be convinced of his Messiahship by the numerous and stupendous miracles which he was daily performing in their presence, and because they insultingly demanded a sign of their own choosing. He refuses to gratify their unreasonable request, but gives them intimation of a sign that would yet be given. This was the sign of the prophet Jonah, whose deliverance from the belly of the fish, after an imprisonment of three days, was symbolical of the resurrection of Jesus, after being confined for such a length of time in the grave. He next warns them of the awful consequences of their unbelief and abuse of the most inestimable privileges. They need not therefore wonder, should the queen of the south rise up in the judgment and condemn them, for she undertook a long and toilsome journey to hear the wisdom of one who was infinitely inferior in dignity and holiness to their present instructor. Nor need they be surprised if the men of Nineveh should heartily concur in the righteousness of their final doom, for these unenlightened heathens repented at the preaching of a fellow-mortal, even though a stranger to their nation, and these professed believers in a divine revelation despised and discredited the words of the Lord from heaven. We live in the days of the Son of man. Let us value and improve our Christian privileges, as we shall answer to God at the judgment day.

As our minds are by nature full of ignorance, and as the most dangerous errors flow from ignorance, let it be our constant study and our daily prayer that

our understandings may be savingly enlightened by the word and Spirit of God; for if that inward faculty, which should be to us as the candle of the Lord, is itself the abode of darkness, who can express the gloom that reigns in the heart of such a man, and who can calculate the errors and inconsistencies into which he will fall? May the word of God, in the hand of the Spirit, ever be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Alas, how constantly was the meek and gentle spirit of Jesus tried by the prejudices and superstitions of the Jews. Even those who treated him with respect and hospitality, allowed their ignorant and contracted views of religion to blind them to the excellence and purity of his character. Their religion had degenerated into a round of empty forms and ceremonial observances. Our Saviour exposed their hollow formality; their pride and hypocrisy; their cruelty and oppression. He gives them warning, in words that ought to have struck terror into their hearts, that the measure of their national sins was fast filling up, and that an awful retribution would be demanded of the existing generation. How literally have these warnings been verified! Let us stand in awe and not sin; for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. It was a dreadful aggravation of the guilt of the Jewish doctors and teachers, that they so shamefully abused their high trust as to keep the people, over whom they were placed, in ignorance of the word of God. They should have opened the treasury of divine truth, and exhibited its riches to the inspection and admiration of all; and they should have made a full and generous offer of these riches, as a portion within the reach of every humble applicant. But they excluded themselves from the enjoyment of spiritual blessings; and, by their authority in evil example, they kept back those who would gladly have entered the gates of the heavenly temple. O the unspeakable guilt of those who take away the key of knowledge from their fellow-men; who prohibit the use of the scriptures, or pervert them by false interpretations!

Let us, my beloved family, who dwell in this Protestant country, rejoice at the thought that we have the free and unfettered use of the Bible; that we have Christian ordinances and a pure gospel worship; and that we are permitted to serve the God of our fathers without fear of molestation. Great are our privileges: may the Lord give us grace wisely to improve them! And may they be preserved to the latest generations.

PRAYER.

Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints! Who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy? Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he has visited and redeemed his people. He has thought on us in our fallen and sinful condition, and laid help on one who is mighty. Our souls would therefore magnify the Lord, and our spirits would rejoice in God our Saviour. Thanks be to God for his unspeak-

able gift. O the breadth and the length, the depth and the height of the love of God in Christ Jesus; it indeed passeth knowledge! May thy Spirit, gracious Father, convince us deeply of sin; may thy goodness lead us to repentance; may thy grace subdue our obstinate and unbelieving hearts. Remove all doubts and misapprehensions from our minds, and give us that faith which is of the operation of thy Spirit. Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief. Strengthen and confirm our faith in Jesus as our own precious Saviour, until our souls are filled with all joy and peace in believing. Alas, O Lord, our hearts are full of darkness as well as unbelief. Do thou shine into our hearts by the light of thy word and Spirit, so that we may not any longer walk in the darkness of our natural state. Of us may it be true, that whereas we were once darkness, we are now light in the Lord. And seeing our light is come, seeing the glory of God is risen upon us, may we arise and shine, even as lights in the world. May we ever recommend the gospel of Jesus to all around us, by a pure conversation and a holy life. Help us, we humbly pray thee, to be faithful and unshrinking in confessing Christ before men. And may we, who now bow down together at the footstool of thy throne of grace, at last meet together before the throne of thy glory, and cast our crowns at the feet of Jesus. Father of mercies, do thou perfect that which concerneth us, and render us meet for the heavenly inheritance. Look down in mercy, holy Father, on the dark and desolate places of the earth. Send forth more labourers into thy harvest. Crown their labours with success, until the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. We affectionately commend our friends to thy fatherly care and thy redeeming grace. We tenderly sympathise with all who are confined to chambers of distress. O Lord, thou knowest their frame; do thou pity and spare them, if it seem good unto thee. Purify them in the furnace of affliction. And may those who are entering the dark valley of the shadow of death, experience the presence and support of the heavenly Shepherd. Take us all, heavenly Father, under the shelter of thy protecting wings this night. And if it is thy good pleasure that we see the light of a new day, may we rise up strengthened for its various duties and trials. And now, may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do

his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and the eternal Spirit, be praise and glory, world without end. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM xcvi. 1.

SCRIPTURE—DEUTERONOMY xxxi.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In ver. 1—8. Moses intimated to the people, that owing to his advanced age, and to the divine appointment, on account of his sin at Meribah, he could no longer go out or come in before them, i. e. that he must give up his office as their inspired leader and lawgiver. He then resigned his charge to Joshua, whom he encouraged to be strong and of good courage, because the Lord would, under his guidance, give the people possession of the promised land. The law was now delivered and recorded, and the lawgiver could be dispensed with, in exchange for the inspired general, who was to lead the chosen of the Lord across the Jordan, to victory and to conquest. Ver. 9—13. Moses next consigned the written law to the priests, the sons of Levi, and to the elders of Israel, to be deposited in the ark of the covenant for safe preservation, and appointed it to be read to all the people—to men, women, children, and strangers, in the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles. The year of release was held every seventh year. It was so called because then every Hebrew bond-man was released from his servitude, and every debtor from the claims of his creditor. It was likewise called the sabbatical year, because then the land had rest, being neither tilled, nor sown, nor reaped. The feast of tabernacles or booths, commenced on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, and lasted seven days. It was celebrated as a season of joy, on account of the ingathering of the crops. During its continuance the Israelites dwelt in booths, in commemoration of their dwelling in booths during their wanderings in the wilderness. When they were thus disengaged from the cares of the world, and reminded of the divine mercies, they ought to have been in the best frame of mind for hearing the law read, and for learning to fear the Lord their God. The remainder of the chapter points out the fearful consequences of their future prosperity, in withdrawing them from their duty, and the heavy sufferings which were to follow their departure from the Lord their God.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Although the Christian minister, parent, or friend, whose labour and kindness appeared indispensable to our salvation, or to our earthly comfort and happiness, be removed from us, if we trust in God he will give us consolation; he will heal every wound, and repair every loss. Should a Moses be withdrawn, a Joshua will be appointed in his stead. As Joshua was raised up to save the Israelites from their ene-

mies, and to beat down every obstacle to their entrance into the earthly Canaan, so in this earthly wilderness, Jesus Christ (of whom Joshua, whose name is the same with Jesus, was a type) subdues all the spiritual enemies of his people, and, as Captain of their salvation, bruises every foe under his feet, and spoils the principalities and powers which would prevent their crossing the boundary which separates them from their heavenly rest. Under his banner, and clothed with the whole armour of God, the Christian soldier will be safe from all danger, and be sure of victory and conquest in the end. The law of God, which was once deposited in the ark of the covenant, and read publicly in the year of release, is now, with the addition of the prophets and the gospels, in the hands of all. It is now very near to us indeed, and should be our study and meditation every day, as well as on the holy rest of the sabbath, when our minds should be disengaged from the pleasures, the vanities, and the cares of this life. In the scriptures we think we have everlasting life. In them are contained the unsearchable riches of Christ, and in them grace, mercy, and peace are multiplied to the redeemed of the Lord Jesus. Let us therefore lay up the truths they contain in our hearts, and in our souls; let us teach them diligently to our children, speaking of them when we sit in the house, and when we walk by the way, when we sit down, and when we rise up. Finally, let us remember that the goodness and forbearance of God are not designed to encourage us in sin, but to lead us to repentance. In the Israelites we have a memorable example of the truth, that those who abuse the mercies of God fail not to treasure up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, we adore thee as our Father who art in heaven, and we acknowledge with gratitude the innumerable tokens we have received of thy parental tenderness. Enable us to exhibit the affection, the obedience, and the devotion which becometh thy children. May we be drawn unto thee by the cords of love, and may thy goodness lead us to repentance. We have, however, continually to deplore our ingratitude and sinfulness, and to lament that our spot is not the spot of thy children. We blush and are ashamed to lift up our faces unto thee; God be merciful to us sinners. Impart to us, we entreat thee, the light and grace of thy Holy Spirit, that we may see and feel our sinfulness and misery, and be led unto him whose blood cleanseth from all sin, that, being justified by faith, we may have peace with God. Enlisted under the banners of the Captain of our salvation, may we follow him through good report and through bad report; and may he subdue all the enemies of our souls in this earthly wilderness, and finally beat down every obstacle that would oppose our entrance into the rest that re-

maineth for the people of God. Blessed be thy name for the testimony which the scriptures bear to Christ, and for the grace, mercy, and peace which they impart to those who are under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. May we desire them more than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Being taught by them how hard and bitter a thing it is to forsake the Lord our God, may we strive to be preserved in the ways of religion, which are alone ways of pleasantness and peace. Enable us to tread in the footsteps of him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Forbid that we should turn thy grace into lasciviousness; that we should rank ourselves among the friends of Christ, while by wicked works we deny him, or that we should set our hearts upon evil, because sentence against our evil works has not been speedily executed. May we set thee, the Lord, always before us, and may thy fear restrain us from evil. Forbid that the cares or the pleasures of this world should choke the growth of religion in our hearts, or that we should plan or undertake any thing this day upon which we cannot ask thy blessing. Heavenly Father, fit us for all the duties of this day; give us strength to resist temptation, and make us a family whose God is the Lord. All we ask and hope for is for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLIII. 3.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XII. 1—32.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1. Leaven is fermented dough, which in warm countries soon becomes sour, and communicates its own properties to the flour amongst which it is laid. The kingdom of Christ is consequently compared to leaven, because it was to spread over the whole world. Corrupt doctrine and ungodly practice are also compared to leaven, from their infectious nature. In the verse before us, hypocrisy is called leaven, because it had spread from the higher to the lower orders of the Jews, and had become a national sin. Ver. 2, 3. In the case of the apostles, hypocrisy would have been the height of folly; as ambassadors of Christ, they had forsaken all in this world, and they knew that they could hide nothing from God, from whom they looked for a heavenly reward. Ver. 4, 5. The fear of man cannot justify hypocrisy, for he can only kill the body, but the fear of God should be a powerful preventive against it, because he can destroy both soul and body in hell. Ver. 6, 7. Nor, argues our Saviour, was hypocrisy, that arose from the fear of man, justifiable on the part of his followers, because they might rest assured, that he, who guardeth the life of a sparrow, and numbereth the hairs of the

head, would not abandon them in the discharge of their holy duties. Ver. 8, 9. Should they, however, from such hypocrisy deny Christ before men, they are warned that he would deny them before the angels of God. From ver. 10. however, it would appear that exclusion from heaven, would not, under all circumstances, be the awful portion of those who denied Christ on earth. 'Whosoever speaketh against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him,' if, like Peter, he sincerely repent; but he, who like the pharisees, in Matt. xii. exhibits a settled hatred of the truth, by quenching the first dawn of spiritual light on the minds of others, on whom it was making an impression, and slanders the Holy Spirit, by ascribing what he knows to be the work of God, to the agency of satan, it shall not be forgiven him. Nor can the professing Christian who has apostatized from Christ (see Heb. vi. 4.) not from weakness of the flesh or spirit, but from a determined hostility to the truth, and who slanders the strivings of the holy Spirit within him, be again renewed unto repentance. In neither case is it affirmed that were true repentance exercised it would be ineffectual; but it is inferred, that the Spirit, grieved by such depravity, and at length quenched, will not again renew such sinners unto repentance. While ver. 10. therefore is intended to prevent despair in the case of less heinous offenders, it holds out an awful warning against determined infidelity and apostacy. Ver. 15—21. Covetousness is denounced upon the general principle that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of his possessions. This truth is illustrated by a parable, which shows the tendency of riches to withdraw our dependence upon God, and to distract our thoughts from the concerns of our souls; and which exhibits the folly of setting our affections on riches, by the fact that they cannot prolong the life a single hour, and that they are likely to entangle us in everlasting misery. Ver. 22, &c. Over anxiety about temporal things is reprehended, and its folly illustrated by the example of the lilies of the field, and of the fowls of heaven. It would be better to render ver. 25. 'Which of you, by over anxiety, can add one moment to his life.' This is one of the lessons of the parable just read, and more suitable to the context. The addition of eighteen inches to the human stature, cannot be called that which is least; and over anxiety about this world, is not in order to increase our stature, but to prolong our lives. In the foregoing passage, we remark, that it is not prudence in the management of our worldly concerns that is reprobated, but covetousness, withdrawing our dependence and affections from God. It is not necessary care for the body that is reprobated, but over solicitude and distrust.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us beware of the leaven of hypocrisy; no sinner compasses his ends in so detestable a manner; he makes profession of every thing that is holy, as a cloak for every thing that is abominable. Let us set the Lord always before us, and remember that no sin can be concealed from him. To him the darkness and the light are both alike. Let us not fear men who would terrify us into sin, for they can only

kill the body, but rather let us fear him who can cast both soul and body into hell. When danger or trouble is ready to overpower us, let us remember that a sparrow is not forgotten before God—that the very hairs of our heads are numbered, and that all things work together for good to those that love God, to those that are called according to his purpose. Above all, let nothing ever tempt us to deny Christ, to slander the work of the Holy Spirit, and thus to crucify to ourselves the Son of God afresh, otherwise, Christ will deny us before the angels in heaven. Let us beware also of covetousness, for it will not profit us, should we gain the whole world, and lose our own souls. Let us likewise remember, that the openly impious and profane, are not the only persons who shall be excluded from heaven; a man may be highly esteemed of men, and still be abominable in the sight of God. If we would enjoy God hereafter, we must glorify him here. Heaven is the inheritance of those alone who live in the fear of God, in the faith of Christ, and under the influences of the Holy Spirit. Let us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and rest in God's promise that the blessings of this life will be added unto us.

PRAYER.

Most gracious and most blessed God, we adore thee as the searcher of the hearts, and the trier of the reins, of the children of men. The most secret thought and action are open to thee, with whom we have to do. Enable us to set thee the Lord ever before us; not to oppress us with a slavish fear, but to restrain us from every thing that is impure and sinful. When temptations to sin present themselves, let us fear thee, who canst cast both soul and body into hell. We recognise thy providential care over us, and we rejoice in the conviction that the very hairs of our heads are numbered by thee. Forbid, O God, that the cares of this world, or the deceitfulness of riches, should deaden our affections for thee, or distract our thoughts from those things that belong unto our everlasting peace. May it be the great end and aim of our lives to glorify thee, and to seek first the kingdom of God, and thy righteousness, in the assurance that all other things will be added unto us. May thy Holy Spirit so change our feelings, desires and affections, that we may practically regard the concerns of our souls as the one thing needful, and may he lead us, by a living faith, unto the Saviour; and enable us to count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Be it the chief desire of our hearts to win him, and to be found in him, not having our own righteousness which is by the law, but the righteousness, which is by the faith in him. Enable us, O God, to give evidence of our attachment to Christ, by our

observance of his commandments, and, constrained by all thy mercies, may we present our bodies a living sacrifice unto thee, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service. We earnestly pray for the extension and advancement of Christ's kingdom at home and abroad, and particularly for its progress in our own hearts. Into thy hands we commend ourselves this night, and all that are near and dear to us, and all we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXX. 1.

SCRIPTURE—DEUTERONOMY XXXIII. XXXIV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In ver. 1—6. A description is given of the majesty of God in the delivery of the moral law, that the people might be impressed with its importance and authority, and with the divine power to enforce obedience. Although it was called a fiery law, on account of its scorching denunciations, and of its delivery in the midst of lightning, it was given in love, 'Yea, the Lord loved his people,' it was their 'schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ.' Ver. 6. Of Reuben, his father Jacob had said, 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel,' yet his posterity are here assured by Moses that they would be spared among the tribes, though shorn of their excellency and dignity, as the descendants of Israel's first-born, 'Let Reuben live and not die.' In ver. 7. It would appear that Moses, by the eye of prophecy, saw Judah lying in affliction, which had driven him to his knees, and on that occasion the prophet intercedes with God on his behalf; 'Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him to his people.' This affliction may be the Babylonish captivity, which had a salutary effect in reclaiming his posterity from idolatry. The subsequent part of the verse may refer to the struggles they encountered in rebuilding the city and temple of Jerusalem, and likewise to the gallant defence of their country in the days of the Maccabees, unsupported by foreign aid. On these occasions 'Judah's own hands were sufficient for him, and the God of Jacob was his helper.' Ver. 8—11. Simeon and Levi are joined together in Gen. xlix. where they are reproved by their father for their cruelty to the Shechemites; 'I will divide them,' said the patriarch, 'in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.' In the passage before us, Simeon is not mentioned, but owing to Levi's subsequent conduct, especially in the matter of the golden calf, his apparent curse is converted into a blessing. From his tribe, sprang Moses the lawgiver, Aaron the high priest, and the other ministers of religion. Aaron is here comforted by the assurance, that notwithstanding the sin that excluded him from Canaan, his Urim and Thummim, i. e. the insignia of his priestly office, would continue in his family. They were to be the priests and teachers of the people. It is true they had no

portion among their brethren, but 'the Lord was their portion.' Ver. 2—23. The prosperity and safety of the other tribes are held forth in emblems similar to those in Gen. xlix. While the Israelites walked in the ways of their God, these blessings would never fail them. When in distress he would ride in the heavens to help them. The eternal God would be their refuge, and underneath the everlasting arms would bear them up. Happy the people thus saved by the Lord, the shield of their help and the sword of their excellency.

In chap. xxxiv. Moses is taken up to the top of Mount Pisgah to view the promised land, and after having seen it afar off, he resigns his spirit into the hands of a faithful Creator. His burial place was concealed from the children of Israel, lest they should pay him divine honour.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How holy is the law of the Lord, which was delivered with such solemnity from Mount Sinai. Surely it is not a vain thing; it is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. One jot or one tittle cannot pass from it; the blood of Christ can alone atone for the transgression of it. How exceedingly should we fear and quake at the thought of breaking it; how deep and godly should be our sorrow, on the slightest violation of it. Although grace and pardon are offered to the believer in Christ, God forbid that we should go on in sin, because that grace abounds. Our proposed repentance may never be found, or, like Reuben's, it may not arrive till we have lost our 'excellency and dignity,' and till we have had awful experience of the hardness and bitterness of forsaking the Lord our God. In time of trouble we should not fail, like Judah, to call from its depths, unto the Lord for help, and to implore that we may be borne up by the everlasting arms of Jehovah. From Levi's case, let us learn, while smarting under the just judgments of God, that if we repent, and cleave unto our reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, the divine chastisements will be converted into blessings. We should likewise learn, that our duties to our nearest and dearest relatives on earth, should never interfere with what is required of us by our Father in heaven. Let us, in fine, keep constantly in mind the privileges and blessings enjoyed by a people saved by the Lord, redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. They shall dip their feet in oil, their shoes shall be of iron, and of brass, and as their days are, so shall their strength be. The Lord will ride upon the heavens in their help.

PRAYER.

We adore and bless thee, Almighty God, as the high and the holy One who inhabitest eternity; as the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift. In thy hands our lives are, and thine are all our ways; we would therefore desire to glorify thee, in our bodies and spirits, which are thine. We adore thee, that, under the Jewish dispensation, thou didst bow the heavens and come down in awful majesty to deliver thy holy law. As that law was

given with such solemnity, may we exceedingly fear and quake at the thought of transgressing it; as it was written by thy finger on tables of stone, let us ever keep before us its eternal obligations. May it be the delight of our hearts, and the rule of our lives. We lament the corruption of our natures which gives us a disrelish for it, which prevents us from seeing any beauty in it that we should desire it, which is constantly suggesting temptations from within and without to transgress it, and which has made us sinners before thee exceedingly. We feel that we cannot of ourselves escape its denunciations, nor satisfy its just requirements. But blessed be thy name, that the hand-writing of condemnation has been blotted out, and nailed to the cross of Christ; that what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh thou didst in mercy accomplish, by sending thine own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh. May the Holy Spirit enable us, by faith, to put our hands upon the head of our atoning sacrifice and to confess our sins over him with unfeigned repentance, that our iniquity being laid upon him, we may be redeemed by his atoning blood. May thy Holy Spirit subdue the corruption of our hearts, despoil us of our weapons of rebellion and clothe us with the whole armour of God. May our lives be adorned by all the fruits of the Spirit, and may our light so shine before men, that they may be thereby induced to glorify their Father in heaven. We earnestly pray Almighty Father, that the light of the gospel may shine upon the heathen nations, and that the means used by our church for that purpose, may be crowned with abundant success. We likewise earnestly pray for the extension of Christ's kingdom in our own land, in our own neighbourhood, in our own hearts. May thy Holy Spirit keep us this day from the evil that is in the world. Take us, and all that are near and dear to us, under thy protecting care, and all we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LIV.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XII. 33—59.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 33. The command to sell all that they had and give alms, was peculiarly applicable to the case of the apostles of Christ. By complying with it, they gave proof of their confidence in their Master's promise, and of the value they set upon treasures

heaven, while they were secured against all anxiety about the things of this world, and free from earthly distractions in preaching the gospel of the kingdom. In ver. 35—40. the disciples of Christ are required to have their loins girt and their lamps burning, lest, as in the case of the rich man, in the preceding parable, their summons to eternity should surprise them like the stealthy and unexpected visit of a thief in the night. In our Saviour's times, the people in the east wore long upper garments, which, when they went to battle, or on a journey, or about any servile work, they fastened up and girded round their waists. The marriages, in Judea, were often protracted far through the night, and it was uncertain when the guests would return home. The night was divided into four watches, of three hours each. The first commenced at sun-set, and ended at 9 o'clock; the second ended at midnight, the third at 3, and the fourth at 6 in the morning. The servants were in the habit of waiting their master's return from the wedding. Their having their loins girt and their lamps burning, indicates their state of preparation for his reception. It appears from this parable that watchfulness is incumbent on all, and that the lesson it contains is applicable to all. Ver. 42—48. The parable which follows has a particular reference to ministers of the gospel. In ver. 49. our Saviour does not mean to say, that it was the object of his coming into the world, to send fire upon the earth, but that fire, i. e. the fire of persecution and great suffering, would be the portion of the early converts to his cause, and he does not, for that reason, wish it to be kindled, but because, through these means, the success of the gospel would be most triumphant, and its evidences most conclusive. Ver. 50. But, before that took place, our Saviour had a baptism to be baptized with. That was a baptism of suffering. Christ was straitened till that baptism was accomplished, because it was thus that human redemption was to be achieved. The effects of the Christian religion, especially on its first publication and reception in any country, are farther described in ver. 51—53. In ver. 54—59. Christ charges his hearers with their want of sagacity in discovering the signs of events which involved the salvation of their souls, while they were quick in predicting the state of the weather, from observing the appearance of the sky; and that while the judgments of God were hanging over their heads, they did not use the opportunities afforded them of averting them. They did not seek to be reconciled unto God, before their final doom overtook them, with the same prudence as the debtor seeks reconciliation with his creditor, before he is dragged before the judge, cast into prison, and confined there until he has paid the uttermost farthing.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The children of God should take comfort, amidst the trials and sufferings in this world, from the promise that it is their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom; they should strive to acquire treasure in heaven, which the moth cannot corrupt, and which the thief cannot plunder. As we cannot tell when God may require our souls of us, we should be constantly preparing ourselves for our Master's

summons, having our loins girt and our lamps burning. Blessed shall we be if, when our Lord cometh, he findeth us so doing. Peculiarly blessed is the portion of the minister of the gospel who turneth many unto righteousness, for he shall shine as the stars in the firmament of heaven, for ever and ever; but awful, indeed, shall be the condition of him by whose instrumentality his people's souls have been ruined. His Lord will come at an hour when he thinketh not; will beat him with many stripes, will cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with unbelievers. Let us not forget, however, that amidst the religious light and privileges we enjoy in this land, we have all means of knowing our Lord's will, and that we are bound to guard ourselves against the corrupt doctrine or the vicious practices of our pastors, should we unhappily have such unfaithful guides. Should it please our heavenly Father to make us pass through the fire of persecution or affliction, let us strive to pass through it as the gold that has been seven times tried. Should we be baptized with suffering, may we be straitened till we are thereby led to a baptism in the fountain which has been opened for all sin and for uncleanness. Should means be used, by our nearest relatives on earth, to separate us from Christ, may they be found utterly powerless in quenching our love and devotion to him. Seeing that without Christ God is a consuming fire, we should earnestly seek the Holy Spirit by whom we are drawn to him, united to him, shielded by him, and saved by him; and we should never forget that if ours is a saving faith in Christ, it will work in us by love, purify our hearts, and reform our lives.

PRAYER.

We approach, this evening, O God, unto thy throne of grace, in the name of the Lord Jesus, who is the only true and living way unto thee; in whom thou seest no iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in Israel. O thou, before whom a sparrow is not forgotten, watch over us and preserve us from all evil. O thou who clotheest the lilies of the field and feedest the fowls of heaven, feed us with the natural food convenient for us, but particularly with that spiritual food which can nourish and sustain our souls through eternity. Wean us, O God, from over-solicitude about the things of this life, and give us grace to value treasures in heaven, and to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. As we know not when our souls may be required of us, may we constantly have our loins girt and our lamps burning, and be waiting for the coming of our Lord. May we be enabled so to act that, whether living or dying, we may be the Lord's. Blessed be thy name for thy sparing mercy; blessed be thy name that thou hast not summoned us to eternity with a load of unrepented guilt. Behold, we are vile in thy sight; O be merciful to us sinners against thee. May thy long suffering lead us to repentance. Save

us, O God, by an everlasting salvation. Justify us freely by thy grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and sanctify our souls by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Inspire us with that zeal for thy service, with that straitening till our work is accomplished, which our blessed Lord exemplified on earth, and while we are assured that unless we have the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his, let us beware of appropriating to ourselves a title to the blessings of his purchase, while we are not striving to live holy, harmless, and undefiled. In time of trouble may we look to the Captain of our salvation, who was made perfect through suffering, and may nothing be ever able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. We feel our own natural weakness and insufficiency, clothe us, we beseech thee, with the whole armour of God, that we may be enabled to stand in the day of trial, and finally to be more than conquerors through him that loved us, and gave himself for us. We implore thy blessing upon the church of Christ at home and abroad. May he sprinkle many nations who are now strangers to him, and may he see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. Unto whom shall we commend the sons and daughters of affliction, but unto thee, the Physician of soul and body. Bless us as a Christian family: whatever others may do around us, as for us may we serve the Lord. Into thy hands we commit ourselves, this night, and all that are near and dear to us; and all we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

FIFTEENTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLV. 3.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XLV.

REMARKS.

We have the authority of the apostle Paul (Heb. i. 8.) for applying this psalm to the Lord Jesus Christ, and it contains a most vivid and animated description of the glories of his mediatorial person; of the boundless riches of his redeeming grace; of the resistless power of his saving arm; of the rectitude and perpetuity of his kingdom,—‘thy throne O God, is for ever and ever;’ of the honour and joy which would be conferred on him by his heavenly Father, as the reward of his humiliation and sufferings; of his union with his church, here styled ‘the Queen,’ under the idea of celebrating a nuptial solemnity; of the surpassing beauty, and resplendent glory of his bride; of the transporting joy with which

she and her attendants would be introduced into the palace of the great King, and of the grateful affection with which he would be regarded, and the lofty praises which would be offered to him by his people, through all eternity.

Ver. 1. ‘My heart is inditing,’ &c. The psalmist’s mind, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, was full of a most sublime and interesting subject, even ‘the king’ Messiah, and his tongue gave utterance to the suggestions of the Holy Ghost, with the same faithfulness and accuracy as a ready writer puts down any composition that has been given him to copy. Ver. 2. The incomparable beauty and excellence of Messiah’s character, as anointed by the Holy Ghost, to declare to perishing men the glad tidings of salvation, are here set before us, as if the psalmist was actually beholding him the moment he spoke. Ver. 3—5. Messiah’s armour, and the conquests which he achieves over the hearts of sinful rebellious men, are here described. Ver. 6—8. Here Messiah is solemnly addressed as God, whose throne is for ever and ever; and yet it is at the same time declared that God, even his God, would, on account of his pre-eminent love of righteousness, and hatred of iniquity, anoint him with the oil of gladness more abundantly than any of his other servants,—a striking proof of the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ, a union which so admirably qualifies him for his great work, and which renders his name so fragrant in the estimation of his people. Ver. 9—16. By ‘the queen’ standing at the king’s right hand, in gold of Ophir, we are to understand either the church in general, or more probably the Hebrew church restored to the favour of her Lord, after her long apostasy and separation, and by ‘king’s daughters,’ the churches of the Gentiles. The whole passage seems to be descriptive of the purity and beauty of the church in the latter day, and the universal joy which shall attend the conversion of the Jews to the faith of Christ.

The glory and excellence of the divine Saviour should ever be the subject of our most devout and delightful meditation. And surely if we contemplate him in those views in which he is presented to us in his word, we must be disposed to exclaim with the psalmist, ‘Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips.’ Let us seriously inquire whether we are among the number of those who see no ‘form or comeliness’ in a Being so transcendently glorious, or of those who reckon him ‘the chief among ten thousand, yea, altogether lovely.’ Have we received him as our Saviour, have we yielded submission to him as our Lord, do we glory in his cross, do we exult in his perfect righteousness, do we rejoice in the triumphs of his grace? And, ‘beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are we changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord?’ Is it a source of heart-felt sorrow to us that he is so generally despised and rejected of men, and do we ardently long, and earnestly pray for the arrival of that auspicious period when Jews and Gentiles shall constitute one glorious church, adorned with all the beauties of holiness? Do we desire to make his name to be remembered throughout all

generations, and do we derive unspeakable satisfaction from the assurance that the time will come when 'all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him?'

PRAYER.

At the footstool of thy throne of grace, O thou infinitely glorious, and merciful Lord God, would we desire, on this morning of thine own day, to prostrate ourselves with the lowliest reverence, beseeching thee to pour out thy Holy Spirit upon us, and to enable us to worship thee who art a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. We are unworthy, O Lord, utterly unworthy to appear before thee, the high and lofty One who inhabitest eternity, and in whose presence angels are represented as veiling their faces with their wings. To us belong shame and confusion of face, because we have rebelled against thee; and hadst thou dealt with us according to our sins, or rewarded us according to our iniquities, we would, at this moment, have been lifting up our eyes in hell, being in torments, instead of being permitted to draw near to thee in prayer, in the name of Jesus thy beloved Son. We thank thee, O Lord, for the institution of thy holy sabbath, in which we have so precious an opportunity of waiting upon thee, both in public and private ordinances of thy worship. May we highly value, and diligently improve, this season of holy rest. May our souls this day thirst for God, for the living God. May we ardently desire to enjoy hallowed communion with thee, as our covenant God, through Jesus Christ. May the world, with all its concerns, be this day banished from our thoughts, and may the infinitely important realities of an unseen and eternal state, occupy our deepest attention. May we seriously consider how soon, how very soon, sabbaths and means of grace shall come to an end, and our spirits be summoned into thy presence, to give an account of the deeds done in the body. May we, therefore, spend every sabbath as if it were the last we were to enjoy on earth, confessing all our sins with godly sorrow, imploring fervently thy pardoning mercy, humbling ourselves deeply in thy presence, exercising a lively faith in the blood and righteousness of Emmanuel, examining ourselves strictly and impartially, whether we are indeed new creatures in Christ Jesus, girding up the loins of our minds, watching and praying, and acting as those who wait for the coming of their Lord. And may we be cheered by a good hope through grace, that, when our earthly house of this tabernacle has been dissolved, we shall have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Let thy name and thy Son's name, be this day specially glorified. O may the mighty Saviour this day gird his sword upon his thigh, and go forth conquering, and to conquer. May the time soon arrive when the glad tidings of salvation shall be published in every land, and Jew and Gentile shall turn to the Lord, and all the kingdoms of this world, become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ. Hear, O Lord, in heaven thy dwelling-place, and do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, for the sake of thy dear Son, whom thou always hearest. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLVI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS XLVI. XLVII.

REMARKS.

IN PSALM XLVI. we have a very striking specimen of that triumphant confidence in her covenant God, which the church is sometimes enabled to exercise. Fixing her eyes steadily on his Almighty power, his gracious promises, his unfailing faithfulness, and his all-pervading presence; she rises nobly superior to all fears, and bids defiance to all enemies. Is she placed in circumstances of great difficulty and distress? God is her refuge, to whom she flees, God is her strength, from whom she looks for seasonable help in the time of trouble. And what though she be threatened with the most awful and overwhelming calamities, none of these things move her; streams of consolation and joy are constantly issuing from that river which flows from God's inexhaustible fullness, of which she is permitted to drink abundantly. What though she be surrounded by numerous and formidable foes, who threaten to crush and destroy her, God is in the midst of her, to defend her, to destroy her enemies, and grant her final deliverance; if God be for us, who can be against us? Let then all who trust in him, maintain an uncomplaining, composed frame of mind; let them profoundly adore a sovereign God; let them rejoice in the thought, that he will yet be exalted among the heathen—that he will be exalted in the earth, and let them daily repeat the delightful truth, that the Lord of hosts is with them, that the God of Jacob is their refuge. It is recorded of the great reformer Luther, that when his prospects became dark and lowering, and his enemies were assuming the most threatening aspect, he was accustomed to say, 'Come let us sing the 46th Psalm, and let them do their worst.'

PSALM XLVII. This psalm seems to have been composed for the grand occasion, in Israel's history, when the ark of the covenant was conducted to mount Zion, and introduced into the most holy place provided for it in the temple, amidst the joyful acclamations of the assembled Israelites. But by this splendid ceremonial was evidently prefigured a far more im-

portant event, even the ascension of the Lord Jesus to the right hand of the Majesty on high, there to take possession of his mediatorial throne, and to appear in behalf of his people. And true Christians are here taught to consider the ascension of their Lord, as an event of transcendent importance, which they ought to celebrate with the most rapturous joy, because then the Saviour who humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, was highly exalted, and triumphed gloriously over all his enemies, and was received by his heavenly Father with ineffable complacency, and poured down those influences of the Holy Spirit, by which multitudes were converted to the faith of the gospel, and by which all nations shall yet be rendered his obedient subjects.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou hast been the dwelling-place of thy people in all generations; thou hast ever been their refuge and their strength, a very present help in the time of trouble. O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee, or to thy faithfulness round about thee. Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. May we therefore at all times, place the firmest confidence in thee, persuaded that if we are indeed among the number of thy believing people, thou wilt cause us to drink of that river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God; that thou wilt ever be in the midst of us, and not suffer us to be moved; that thou the Lord wilt help us in every time of difficulty and distress, and that right early. We desire, O Lord, to thank thee for the opportunity we have this day enjoyed of assembling together in thy sanctuary, in order to engage in the public exercises of thy worship, and to hear the precious truths of thy word. O may the preaching of thy gospel be accompanied with power from on high, for the conviction of sinners; for comforting and edifying the body of Christ. And while so many, alas! resist all the compassionate entreaties of a beseeching Saviour, and treasure up to themselves wrath, against the day of wrath, O may we be indeed his humble, faithful, devoted disciples. May we study to adorn the doctrine of our God and Saviour in all things, by living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world; may we be panting after greater conformity to his holy image; may we be deeply abased on account of our manifold sins and imperfections; and may we come boldly to thy throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need. O may we regard thee as a God to be adored, a God to be loved, a God to be trusted in, a God to be served, and a God to be enjoyed through all eternity. And O may Christ dwell in our hearts by faith, that we,

being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. And feeling an increasing sense of our obligations to him who loved us, and gave himself for us, may we abound more and more in the work of the Lord. May we every sabbath be receiving additional strength from above, to enable us to resist every temptation, to conquer every enemy, and to discharge every duty. And while we thus pray for ourselves, we would also supplicate thee in behalf of all our brethren of mankind; we pray for the young—the more advanced in life—for the aged, and the dying; give them grace and strength to serve and trust in thee, according to their day. We pray for the ministers of the everlasting gospel, especially for thy servant who labours among us in holy things. O may he be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of God. May he be the honoured instrument in thine hand of turning many unto righteousness, and of directing, comforting, and animating thy people. And now, Lord, we commend ourselves to thy watchful care during the hours of repose. May we lie down at peace with thee, at peace with ourselves, and at peace with all mankind. And when our sabbaths on earth have come to an end, O may we spend an eternal sabbath of joy and love in thy presence on high. Hear, O Lord, we beseech thee, these our supplications, and grant us a gracious answer, for the Lord Jesus' sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLVII. 7.

SCRIPTURE—JOSHUA I.

REMARKS.

Moses, the honoured servant of God, and venerated leader of the Israelites was now called to his rest; Joshua is divinely appointed his successor. The people are commanded to advance under his conduct to the promised land. He is divinely encouraged to proceed, with the assurances of triumph and success; and as the grand means of ensuring prosperity to all his enterprises, and of maintaining right sentiments and affections in his soul, he was enjoined to cultivate a most familiar acquaintance with the divine law, and to make it the subject of his daily and devout meditation. And may not the people of God hence learn, that they should go forth to encounter the enemies of their salvation, entertaining the confident and animating persuasion, that through the mighty power of the

Spirit of God, they shall certainly obtain the victory? Should they not be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; and should they not rejoice in the thought, that his grace will be made sufficient for them, and his strength perfected in their weakness? If the Lord their God be with them, why should they be afraid or dismayed? Is there any one that can defeat his purposes, or snatch them out of his hand? What though they must maintain a warfare with the devil, the world, and the flesh, at every step of their journey towards the promised land; should not these heart-cheering words of their covenant God dispel all their fears, 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest?' And in order that their faith, and love, and hope may be kept in lively and vigorous exercise, let the word of Christ dwell in them richly; let them every day consult it with the deepest reverence and attention, that they may become better acquainted with the character of God, and with the depravity, treachery, and inconstancy of their own hearts, that they may obtain direction in all their difficulties, comfort under all their afflictions, and encouragement amidst all their fears. And let them remember, that daily, and devout, and prayerful perusal of the holy scriptures, is essential to the prosperity of their souls, and that the more exalted their station, and the more arduous the duties which they have to discharge, the more necessary it is that God's word be their meditation all the day.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, the creator of the ends of the earth who faintest not, neither art weary. In thee we live, and move, and have our being. Thou hast given us existence, thou preservest our lives every moment, thou hast allotted to us the situations which we occupy, and whenever the time which thou hast appointed us on earth shall come to an end, then thou changeest our countenance and sendest us away. Thou art continually reminding us by the voice of thy providence that from the stroke of death there is no exemption, either to the high or the low, the rich or the poor, the young or the old; that, even thy most faithful and devoted servants must yield to this universal conqueror, and resign to others the offices with which they are invested. May we contemplate these thy dispensations with the deepest solemnity; may we derive from them the salutary lessons which they are intended to teach. May they lead us seriously to consider, that the time of our departure may be at hand, that in a very short period we may be summoned to give an account of our stewardship, and to hear from the lips of our Judge that sentence by which our everlasting destiny shall be decided. We praise thee, O Lord, in behalf of all thy servants who have fought the good fight, and finished their course,

and kept the faith; and that thou raisest up others to serve thee, and promote thy great designs to thy church and people. And suffer us not to yield to discouragement while pursuing our journey to the Canaan above. May the hope of being victorious over all our spiritual enemies, strengthen us amidst every conflict. Do thou, our God, be with us, and enable us to perform every duty, to resist every temptation, and to endure every hardship and affliction in thy service. May we highly value, and attentively study, thy holy word; may it be sweeter to our taste, than honey to our mouth; and prove a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path. O may thy Holy Spirit shine into our minds, and quicken our affections, and give us all joy and peace in believing. And may we not only read and hear the scripture, given by inspiration of God, but may we observe to do all that is written therein, that thus thou mayest make our way prosperous, and grant us good success. And now, Lord, we desire to render to thee our united acknowledgments for thy kindness to us during the past night, and for permitting us this morning to assemble at the footstool of thy throne of grace. We beseech thee to vouchsafe to us thy presence and thy blessing this day. May we enter upon the discharge of our various duties with cheerfulness and zeal, not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of our heart as unto the Lord, with good-will doing service as to the Lord, and not unto men. May our light so shine before men, that others, seeing our good works, may glorify thee our heavenly Father. May we never forget that thou, God, seest us at all times, and in all places; and may we ever think, and speak, and act as in thy presence. May we diligently cultivate all the graces of thy Holy Spirit. May we be humble, meek, patient, forgiving; not rendering railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing. May we put away from us all wrath, and malice, and clamour, and evil-speaking, and be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. May we never be overcome of evil, but always endeavour, in imitation of our Lord and Master, to overcome evil with good. O Lord, do thou be our keeper this day, be thou our shade at our right hand. O Lord, preserve us from all evil; preserve our soul. O Lord, preserve our going out, and coming in, from this time forth, even for evermore. Our waiting eyes, O Lord, are towards thee; our hope is placed only in thy mercy. Hear us graciously, and love us freely, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLVIII. 10.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XIII.

REMARKS.

This chapter is full of the most important instructions, and the most solemn warnings. Our Lord here teaches us, that when extraordinary calamities befall any of our fellow-men, we are not warranted to consider them as greater sinners than others, who have been subjected to no such awful visitations; and that instead of sitting in judgment on those who may have been cut off by some sudden and awful stroke, it would be far more profitable to reflect on the declaration here, twice repeated by our Lord, that, unless we repent, we must perish. In the parable of the barren fig-tree, we are reminded of the immense advantages we enjoy under the dispensation of the gospel, for bringing forth those fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God; and of the aggravated guilt we incur, and the tremendous danger to which we expose ourselves, by neglecting to improve these advantages. Are we, then, still cumberers of the ground? Let us tremble at the thought, that the axe is lying at the root of the tree, and that every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, must be hewn down and cast into the fire, the fire of hell that is unquenchable. In the case of the woman who was bowed down with a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, but whom our Lord, nevertheless, found in the synagogue, we have a very interesting example of one who could say from the heart, 'Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth,' and who could declare that it was good for her to draw near to God; for she obtained a cure of her bodily disease, and her mouth was opened to glorify God. It is no trifling cause which will prevent a daughter of Abraham from appearing in the sanctuary. How base and detestable was the hypocrisy of the ruler of the synagogue, in representing the cure of this woman, effected by a word from the mouth of Christ, as a breach of the rest of the sabbath; and how completely and justly was he put to shame, by the familiar and opposite illustration employed by our Lord. In the parables of the grain of mustard seed and of the leaven hid in three measures of meal, we are taught that the religion of Christ, though small in its beginnings, will ultimately overspread the whole world, and be a source of the greatest blessings to all mankind; and that whenever it has obtained a lodgment in any human soul, it will gradually pervade all its faculties and affections, and assimilate them to its own nature. Has it yet obtained admission into our hearts, and is the Spirit of God daily employing it, in order to transform us more and more into the divine image? The answer which Jesus gave to the man who asked him, 'Are there few that be saved?' shows us, that the source of our anxiety should be, not to ascertain how many or how few shall be saved, but whether we ourselves are among the number; and that, while the door of mercy is open, we should make the most vigorous and determined efforts to enter in at the strait gate.

And surely our everlasting salvation is an object worthy of all the anxiety we can feel, and all the efforts we can make, in order to effect it.

PRAYER.

O thou holy, holy, holy Lord God, how shall we, who are but dust and ashes, take it upon us to speak unto the Lord? O how unworthy are we to appear in thy presence, or to take thine infinitely glorious name into our polluted lips! O how justly mightest thou have mingled our blood with our sacrifice, and cut us off while thus worshipping thee with our mouth, and honouring thee with our lips, while our hearts were far from thee. Verily it is because thou art God, and not man, and thy compassions fail not, that we are not consumed. O may thy goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, lead us to repentance. May we think on our former evil ways and our doings, which have not been good, and may we loathe ourselves in our own sight for our iniquities and our abominations which we have committed. May the consideration of the base return which we have made for all thy favours, and especially for the stupendous gift of thy Son, excite the deepest contrition in our souls, and dispose us earnestly to plead for thy pardoning mercy. And, O suffer us not to go on to sin, because thy grace abounds. May we be thoroughly in earnest in the grand concern of salvation. May we strive to enter in at the strait gate, and not be contented with transient wishes and occasional efforts to flee from the wrath to come. And let us not be satisfied with a mere external profession, calling Christ, Lord, Lord, while we do not the things which he says, lest we should be among that wretched number to whom he will say at the last great day, I know you not, depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. May we ever remember that we are not our own, but bought with a price, and that therefore we are bound to glorify thee in our bodies and spirits, which are thine. May we henceforth be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know, that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. We thank thee, O Lord, for thy preserving care and thy heavenly bounty this day. May we never forget, that all we are, and all we have, is thine, that every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights. We beseech thee, to shower down thy best blessings on us as a family. May we be all thy beloved children, through faith in Christ Jesus; all renewed in the spirit of our minds, all animated with the desire of pleasing

thee, our heavenly Father, and all studying to promote each other's comfort and welfare. May peace be ever within our dwelling, and our hearts be knit together in love. May we all serve thee in our day and generation on earth; may we all be faithful unto death, that we may obtain a crown of life. And now, O thou, who keepest Israel, who neither slumberest nor sleepest, we commit ourselves to thy care, during the silent watches of the night. May we enjoy undisturbed and refreshing repose if it be thy will. And when the night of death arrives, and the great midnight cry is heard, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him, may our loins be girded about, and our lamps burning, and we ourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord. O Lord, hear, O Lord forgive, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIV.

SCRIPTURE—JOSHUA III. IV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

CHAP. III. 5. In this portion of holy writ, we have the most remarkable instance of God's special presence with his ancient people, and of his care over them. The command, 'Sanctify yourselves,' impressively announced the solemnity of the occasion. This charge was enforced by the appropriate consideration that the divine omnipotence was to be strikingly displayed before all Israel. The Jordan, at some periods of the year, was comparatively a small stream; but at the season referred to, the vernal equinox, it usually swelled into a river of great depth, and rapidity, overflowing all its banks. By the signal interposition of the Almighty, a passage was made for the Israelites to pass through. CHAP. III. 13—17. The chosen servant of God expressly intimated to the Israelites, beforehand, what was to happen; and an important purpose, in the scheme of providence, was answered by this astonishing event. It must therefore have taken place by divine appointment. Chap. iii. 7; iv. 14. It was intended, in a subordinate sense, to confirm the authority of Joshua, and prove his commission.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How replete with instruction is this narrative? Joshua evinced a simple reliance on the promised interposition of the Most High, and the chosen people implicitly followed the directions of their divinely appointed leader. When the tribes of Israel arrived at the Jordan, that river, to all human appearance, presented an insuperable barrier to their progress. But they 'staggered not through unbelief.' They left it, in unshaken faith, to God to open up a way for them to pass over. In the exercise of that holy principle, Joshua calmly issued the necessary orders,

calling upon the children of Israel to come and hear the words of the Lord their God. And, having properly marshalled the vast multitude, he commanded them to move forward. As yet the unconscious stream ran deep and broad before them; but they confided in the divine pledge, and, at the word of the Lord of all the earth, 'Jordan was driven back.' What a reproof to all distrustfulness does this event supply! There was indeed much of speciality in the case. But is it not God's faithful promise to his believing people of every age, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee?' Let us only believe God, and according to our faith so shall it be unto us, if not clearly in reference to the things of time, yet certainly with respect to the far more important concerns of eternity. While we are pursuing the path of commanded duty, though our prospects may become dark, and our advancement be apparently obstructed for a season, let us not be discouraged; for every cloud will be at length dispelled and every hinderance removed, if we rely on the Rock of ages. If our confidence in the all-sufficient Saviour be steadfast and entire, when we pass through the waters, he will be with us, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow us. If we repose our trust exclusively on his finished work, he will sustain us amid the swellings of the mystical Jordan, and convey us safe and triumphant to that 'better country, even an heavenly.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, grant us thy grace, this morning, that we may be enabled to worship thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. We adore thee as the God of our life and the length of our days, for in thee we live, and move, and have our being. Thou hast been the hiding-place of thy people in all generations; give us now richly to experience thy favour, through the Lord Jesus Christ, while we draw near unto thee in the lively exercise of faith and of every devout affection. The heavens, O Lord, declare thy glory, and the firmament sheweth forth the workmanship of thy hand; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge of thee, the Almighty. All thy works praise thee, and thy saints they bless thy name. We thank thee for again permitting us, in the course of thy good providence, to worship together, as a Christian family, at thy footstool. O bless to us the reading of thy word. May we ever seriously remember, that whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our instruction. Establish our confidence in thy power and faithfulness. And may we all seek earnestly to be followers of them who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises. We bless thee for the mercies of the past night and of this morning. Thou art daily loading us with thy benefits. But, O how unworthy are we of any, even the least of thy mercies. We have all sinned and come short

of thy glory. We have been unfaithful stewards of thy bounty, and slothful servants in thy vineyard. We have sinned at once against the clearest light and the tenderest love. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, according to thy loving-kindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out our transgressions. With lowly and penitent hearts we would supplicate thy forgiveness. Regard us not as we are in ourselves, but look upon us in the face of thine Anointed. Grant that, through the atoning blood of our adorable Redeemer, we may know experimentally the blessedness of them whose iniquities are pardoned and whose sins are covered. And may Christ be made, of thee, unto our souls, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption! Pour out upon us, we entreat thee, the Holy Spirit, to help our infirmities, and lead us unto all truth. Take away the hard and stony heart, and bestow upon us hearts broken and contrite. Enable us to lay aside every weight and the sins that do more easily beset us. Help us to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Fit us for the duties and support us under the trials of this day. We would cast all our care upon thee, and do thou graciously sustain us. Prosper our undertakings, so far as they may be agreeable to thy will. Grant us an holy submission to thy divine disposal. Preserve us from every snare and evil way. May Christ be formed in us the hope of glory, and may we be rooted and grounded in his love. Enlarge our hearts, that we may run in the way of thy commandments. May thy presence go with us whithersoever we shall be called in providence this day. Preserve our eyes from tears, our feet from falling, and our souls from death. Our hope, O Lord, is in thee; let our help come from thee: and we ask all in the name, and for the sake, of Jesus Christ, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXVIII.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XIV.

REMARKS.

How plainly and repeatedly are we taught, in the discourses of our Lord, that mercy is better than sacrifice? But though deeds of compassion or benevolence, and works of necessity, may be performed on the Christian as well as on the Jewish sabbath, we must not violate its sanctity either by worldly employments or recreations. Neither must we countenance any scheme which would have such a ten-

dency, but keep one day in seven holy to the Lord. It becomes every follower of Jesus to cultivate lowliness of mind. Let us earnestly seek to be clothed with humility. Let us beware especially of spiritual pride, and of saying in our hearts, with regard to any fellow-creature, Stand by, for I am holier than thou. A taste for sumptuous entertainments is attended with many evils. It leads, to say the least, to a needless waste of time and substance, which might be far better employed in feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Such feasts too often tend to foster a hollow semblance of friendship, where the reality is wanting. Of true generosity or kindly regard they are very uncertain, equivocal proofs. O how fertile is the perverse ingenuity of man in devising excuses for negligence as to the concerns of the soul and eternity! We are ever prone to walk more by sight than by faith, and to prefer things seen and temporal to things unseen and eternal. The snares into which we fall, or rather, the idols we worship, in the objects of time and sense, may be extremely various, according to circumstances; but the inherent disinclination to godliness, that leads us astray, is in all the same. Let every one, therefore, diligently search out the plague of his own heart in this respect. If we had any just conception of the infinite value of our immortal souls, how anxiously should we inquire, each for himself, 'What shall I do to be saved?' We should then be willing to lose all, that we might win Christ and be found in him. We should be prepared to relinquish our earthly enjoyments and earthly possessions, though dear to us as a right eye, or profitable as a right hand, for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Such being the case, shall we rest satisfied with a name to live? While even the fruitful branch is purged, the withered branch is lopped off and cast into the fire. Let us examine ourselves whether we be in the faith. If we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his.

PRAYER.

Most gracious and ever blessed God, pour out upon us, this evening, a spirit of grace and of supplication. Quicken us that we may call upon thy name, and draw out the desires of our souls after thee. But while we approach thee as the hearer and answerer of prayer, and the faithful rewarder of all those who truly seek thy face, through the divine Mediator, we feel that in thy presence we are sinful dust and ashes. The very heavens, O Lord, are not clean in thy sight, and thou chargest even thine angels with folly. How unworthy, then, are we, the fallen children of men, to take thy thrice holy name into our polluted lips! Thou didst indeed, at first, make man upright, but we have sought out many inventions. How has the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed! We are now, by nature and by practice, the children of disobedience and deserved wrath. From the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there is no

spiritual soundness in us; we are covered with wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. If we should attempt to justify ourselves, our own mouths would condemn us. If we should say that we are righteous, that also would prove us perverse. We have nothing, and can do nothing, to avert thy just displeasure. Imperfection cleaves to our best services; defilement mingles with the purest purposes of our hearts. The sins of our holy things are more than sufficient to condemn us. Penetrated with a sense of our guilt, we implore thy pardoning mercy and thy sanctifying grace. Hear us in him whom thou bearest always, and be at peace with our souls for his sake in whom thou art ever well pleased. May we be justified freely by thy grace, sanctified wholly by thy Spirit, and kept by thy mighty power, through faith, unto salvation. O Lord, enable us henceforth to love thee more, and serve thee better than ever yet we have done. The objects of time and sense have too much engrossed our hearts, to the neglect of the great realities of eternity. Moderate our attachment to earthly things. Wean our affections from worldly vanities. Help us to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and to weep as though we wept not, and to use this world so as not to abuse it; ever remembering that the fashion of it passeth away. Enable us to make choice of that better part which shall not be taken from us. May we, by the aids of thy grace, be making daily progress in the divine life. Grant us the wisdom that is from above. Grant us that humility which is well-pleasing in thy sight, and that meekness of spirit which, in thy estimation, is of great price. We would ever cherish on our spirits, at thy footstool, a sincere desire for the temporal and eternal welfare of all our fellow-men. Extended, more and more, the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom. And do thou abundantly bless and prosper all the means employed for the universal diffusion of Christianity. Comfort the mourners in Zion. Speak peace to the troubled in mind. Sanctify affliction to the afflicted. Mercifully spare useful lives: fit and prepare the dying for death, and judgment, and a blessed immortality. May all who are dear to us, by the ties of nature or friendship, be the objects of thy special favour. May they and we be heirs together of the grace of life. Beautifully reward all who have done us good or wished us well; graciously forgive those who have done or wish us evil, and enable us from the heart to forgive them. We praise thy name for thy watchful care and kind providence over us throughout the day. We commit ourselves

to thy protection for the night. Suffer no evil to befall us, and no plague to come near our dwelling. And to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost we ascribe the kingdom, power, and glory for ever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV.

SCRIPTURE—JOSHUA VI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 17—25. Nothing but a clear divine command, could have warranted the unsparing destruction of the inhabitants of Jericho. Every vindication of it on other grounds, must be unsatisfactory. In the case of Rahab, the only exception mentioned, we see a notable instance of God's sovereign grace. Jericho was afterwards rebuilt; but the rebuilders paid the dire forfeiture denounced against him, 1 Kings xvi. 34.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

When the Israelites first approached Jericho, the lofty bulwarks of that fenced city must have impressed them with a discouraging idea of its great strength. Their general too, from his knowledge and experience in such matters, must have been well aware, that its strong fortifications would render it almost impregnable to mere human force. But while he surveyed its ramparts, with the eye of a veteran warrior, he reposed his expectation of reducing it on other means than the devices of ordinary warfare. The mode of attack he was enjoined to follow, could not fail to strike him as being in itself utterly unavailing; and perhaps it appeared to the besieged in the light of a silly and childish parade, more calculated to excite derision, than to inspire dismay. Still, Joshua and the children of Israel trusted in the power and faithfulness of the Lord Jehovah. They acted, therefore, upon the instructions communicated from on high with unwavering confidence. When the appointed time was come, the shout of victory was raised; and immediately the towering battlements of the devoted city were laid low in the dust. 'By faith the walls of Jericho fell down,' Heb. xi. 30. Joshua of old, was an eminent type of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Messiah, like him, was given to be a leader and commander to the people. But O how immeasurable is the superiority of the divine antitype! He is not merely the grand agent in executing the scheme of grace devised by the Father's love; but he also bore a part in the contrivance of it, and its accomplishment was effected at the price of his infinitely precious blood. If, then, the Israelites relied on the guidance of Joshua, and yielded implicit obedience to his injunctions, with what confidence and grateful alacrity ought we to follow the Captain of our salvation? If we resign ourselves humbly and entirely to the direction he affords by his word and Spirit, he will conduct us in safety through the waste and howling

wilderness of earthly trial and suffering; he will enable us to surmount every obstacle, and vanquish every foe, and he will finally make good our settlement in the glorious mansions of immortal blessedness.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most gracious God, we desire again to lift up our hearts with our hands unto thee, and to worship reverently towards thy holy place. Every new day brings to us additional proofs of thy gracious care and unceasing kindness. We bless thy name, that thou hast watched over us during the silence and darkness of the past night. We thank thee, for all that is comfortable in our circumstances at this time. Thy loving-kindness is new to us every morning; great is thy faithfulness. Early, O Lord, were we all cast upon thy care, and hitherto hast thou sustained us through all the dangers and difficulties that have beset our path in life. We would, therefore, call upon our souls and all that is within us, to be stirred up to magnify and bless thy name. But while we sincerely thank thee for health of body and soundness of mind, and all our other temporal mercies, we would praise thee, more especially for the Christian privileges with which we are favoured. We bless thee for thy holy word and all the means of grace that we enjoy. May we be enabled to improve them diligently, ever mindful that of them to whom much is given, much will be required! But above all thy other benefits, would we extol thee, O Lord, for Jesus Christ, thine unspeakable gift. We earnestly desire to regard him as the only foundation of our hopes for eternity, and the source of all present peace and consolation. We confess before thee, our guilt and unworthiness. Grant us, O Lord, a true repentance towards thee, and a sincere faith in thy Son, our Saviour. Iniquities daily prevail against us. The scope of our affections is unsanctified, and the tenor of our thoughts unholy. There is in each of us an evil heart of unbelief. Enter not into judgment with us. In the midst of deserved wrath, remember us with unmerited mercy. Glory be to thy name, with thee there is forgiveness, that thou mayest be feared; with thee there is mercy and plenteous redemption! Blot out our sins in the peace-speaking blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Give us to experience thee to be in him our reconciled God and Father. And enable us by thy heavenly grace, henceforth to cherish the tempers and dispositions of thy true children. Grant us the victory over the world, the devil and the flesh. Enlighten our minds in the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. Fill our souls with joy and peace in

believing. Sanctify unto us all the dispensations of thy providence, and every solemn warning from thy blessed word. We desire to go forward to the duties before us this day, in an humble reliance on thy guidance and support. Let thy grace be sufficient for us; perfect thy strength in our weakness. Increase our faith; enlarge our charity. Help us in all that we do or undertake to acknowledge thee, that thou mayest direct our steps. Whether outward prosperity or adversity await us, O do thou enrich our souls with thy blessing, and visit us with thy benign salvation. Mercifully preserve our outgoings and in-comings. Help us at all times to realize thy holy presence and inspection. Let goodness and mercy follow us. And do thou to us, and for us, exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XL.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—7. The design of the first of the parables recorded in this chapter, obviously was to show that God has not only provided the means of restoration but also, moved with divine compassion, mercifully strives, by his grace and Spirit, to reclaim the lost and teaches that their salvation inspires the angel on high with the liveliest emotions of joy. Here perhaps, Christ reasoned on their own principles, and took for granted, for the sake of illustration, what the scribes and pharisees mistakingly supposed to be the fact, namely, that there were some men, and themselves among the number, who needed no repentance. Ver. 8—10. For the purpose of impressing the same humbling, yet consolatory truths more deeply on their prejudiced minds, the important lesson was repeated under a different form. Ver. 11—32. Our Lord next introduces, with a similar view, an example of the tenderest paternal kindness towards a most unworthy object. From this touching narrative we are plainly taught that God graciously receives into his favour the returning penitent, and loads him with the richest tokens of his unmerited love. But while the blessed Jesus establishes these points, by a resistless appeal to the human heart, he paints, in true colours, the desperate innate depravity of man when left to pursue an unrestrained course of guilt. And he also justly exposes, in the envious feeling of the elder son, the self-complacent and contracted notions of all those, whether Jews or Gentiles, who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others, and whose eye is evil, because God is good.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Alas, we all, like sheep, have gone astray, and

wandered every one after his own way. But blessed be God, who willeth not the destruction of any of his creatures; he hath sent his only-begotten Son into the world, to seek and save lost and perishing sinners. Christ has redeemed to himself a chosen people, out of every kindred and tongue under heaven, and all these he, as the good Shepherd, will gather at last into the divine fold. At what a price did he purchase his church, even that of his infinitely precious blood! The angels themselves desire to look into the astonishing mystery of redemption, and rejoice, in their celestial abodes, to behold its glorious results. What Christian, then, could be indifferent about the success of the gospel? Though our heavenly Father hath nourished and brought us up as children, we have rebelled against him. Yet he freely extends to us the arms of compassion and forgiveness. We have all forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water. But no experience of the emptiness of worldly pleasures will ever of itself bring us back to God. We must be drawn by the all-powerful influence of his converting grace, before we can feel any real desire to return to him. Neither is this the case merely with flagrant offenders. All are alike impotent and helpless. All must be indebted to the divine mercy in the Lord Jesus Christ. How vain is every self-righteous ground of dependence! There is indeed a vast difference in the degrees of human guilt. But can any man set up a plea of innocence? 'There is none righteous; no, not one.' The only distinction in this respect, which exists among the apostate children of men, is a distinction, not of merit, but of ill-desert. And all the claim that could be justly founded upon it, would confer but a poor pre-eminence on the best of our race; a less condemnation, a lighter punishment. 'By grace are we saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God. Where is boasting then? It is excluded.'

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the Father of lights and the fountain of every blessing. From thee cometh down every good and perfect gift; and with thee there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning. Thou hast clothed our bodies with skin and flesh, and fenced them with bones and sinews; and thy inspiration has given unto man understanding. By the word of thy power were we brought into existence, and by the exercise of thy providence are we upheld in being. We are bound by every tie of duty and of gratitude to love and serve thee. But, O how prone are we all to forget thee, the God that made us, and lightly to esteem thee, the Rock of our salvation! Thy paternal bounty is the source of all our mercies, and thy paternal care our only secure and unfailing refuge; yet, alas, we daily sin against heaven and in thy sight; and we are utterly unworthy to be called thy children. We

have become weary of the salutary restraints of thy law. We have abused thy goodness, and trampled on thy authority. But, ever blessed be thy name, thy ways are not as our ways, nor thy thoughts as our thoughts! Thou hast caused us to hope in thy word. Thou mercifully invitest even the chief of sinners to return unto thee; and thou hast appointed a gracious method of acceptance, through the atoning death and all-prevalent intercession of Jesus Christ our Saviour. O Lord, if any of us be still at a distance from thee, do thou, by the Holy Spirit, bring us back to thyself. And do thou receive us graciously, heal our backslidings, and love us freely. If thou hast already sought and found us, enable us henceforth to cleave unto thee with full purpose of heart. And O help us to live in habitual remembrance that we are not our own, but bought with a sacred price, even the blood of thy Son. While at thy footstool in our own behalf, we desire to remember before thee all our brethren of mankind. O Father of mercies, let thy name be known through all the earth, and thy saving health among all nations! Cause the light of the blessed gospel to shine into the dark places of the earth. Bring in thine ancient people the Jews, with the fulness of the Gentiles. May sinners every where be turned from darkness unto light, from Satan unto God. May all who name the name of Jesus depart from iniquity. And may pure and undefiled religion more and more flourish in our land. In behalf of our friends we earnestly implore thy favour, which is life, and thy loving-kindness, which is better than life. Our enemies we sincerely commend to thy forgiveness. Visit, in mercy, all the chambers of sickness and mourning. Bless us, O Lord, even us here in thy presence, as a Christian household; and bless each of us according to our respective necessities. Supply all our temporal wants out of the treasures of thy providence, and all our spiritual need out of the riches of thy grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. May we all have an interest in the blessings of that covenant which is well ordered in all things and sure. May we be fellow-heirs of that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away. For the mercies of the day that has now closed, we offer up unto thee our united and fervent thanksgivings. O thou great Shepherd of Israel, who never slumberest nor sleepest, do thou keep watch over us through the silent hours of the ensuing night. We desire to resign ourselves entirely to thy gracious disposal. For us to live, may it be Christ; for us to die, may it be great gain. May

we spend the remaining time of our sojourning upon earth in thy fear and service. And when thou hast accomplished in us, and by us, all thy wise and good purposes here below, grant that an abundant entrance may be ministered unto our spirits, into the heavenly mansions of light and glory, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXVI. 1—6.

SCRIPTURE—JOSHUA VII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

1. What is undertaken, without asking counsel of God, and in our own strength, cannot be expected to prosper. 2. The secret sins of individuals may bring down judgments upon the church or community with which they are connected. 3. Sins committed in secret are often brought to light in a remarkable manner. 4. However men may contrive to conceal their transgressions here, there is a time coming, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us undertake no enterprise, without asking counsel of God by prayer. Acknowledge him in all thy ways, and he will direct thy steps. Let us do all in dependence upon the grace of God, having no confidence in our own strength. He that trusteth to his own heart is a fool. When chastisements and judgments are sent down upon a community or upon individuals, there is a call for humiliation and prayer, and for inquiring into the cause of such dispensations. In pleading for the averting of judgments and for God's returning favour, there should be a primary regard to the manifestation of God's glory. What wilt thou do unto thy great name? Help us for the glory of thy name. In times of trial and judgment, while we ought to be laid low before God acknowledging our unworthiness, we ought also to be active in removing the causes of God's being offended. Up, sanctify the people. 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies. I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.' When the path of duty is set before us, there should be no delay in entering upon it. Joshua rose up early in the morning to discharge the duty to which he was called. Sinners must be exhorted to repent, and to give God glory, by an open acknowledgment of their transgressions. Let us take heed and beware of covetousness, which proved the ruin of Achan. Let us plead that God would search and try our hearts, that no sin may be secretly indulged there, which may afterwards be brought to light to our shame and confusion. Finally, when we read of God's displeasure being manifested in a striking manner against sinners, let us thereby be led to look upon all sin, and especially our own sins, with utter abhorrence.

PRAYER.

Holy Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thou art glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. Thou art to be sanctified of all them who draw near to thee. Solemnize our minds for thy service. Banish all distracting thoughts. May all within us be now engaged in thy service. We have no righteousness of our own, in which to appear before thee. But we come in the all-prevailing name of thy beloved Son, in whom thou art ever well pleased. See, O God, our Shield, look upon the face of thine Anointed, and for his sake grant us the help of thy Holy Spirit, that we may now present to thee a sacrifice and offering acceptable in thy sight. We give glory to thy name, by acknowledging that thou art glorious, and excellent, and infinitely exalted, and infinitely worthy to receive all adoration and praise. We give glory to thy name, by acknowledging that we are less than the least of all thy mercies, that we are chargeable with innumerable transgressions of thy holy law, that we have destroyed ourselves by sin. We give glory to thy name, by receiving the testimony which thou hast given concerning thy Son, that thou hast given us eternal life, and that this life is in thy Son; that thou art in Christ reconciling the world to thyself, not imputing unto them their trespasses; and that through him is preached unto us the forgiveness of sins. It is in his all-prevailing name that we come before thee at this time, earnestly imploring the help of thy Holy Spirit to teach us to pray to thee. Make us deeply sensible of our spiritual wants, and do thou supply all our need, according to thy riches in glory, by Jesus Christ. Bless to us all the means of grace wherewith we are favoured. Bless to us what we have been hearing from thy word. May we acknowledge thee in all our ways; do thou direct all our steps. Cleanse us from all secret faults, keep us back also from all presumptuous sins, and suffer them not to have dominion over us. May we take heed and beware of covetousness. Deepen our impressions of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Take away all our iniquity. Receive us graciously, love us freely. May we by the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body; that we may live to the glory of thy name. Accept, heavenly Father, of our united praises for thy watchful care over us during the night for the rest and refreshment which thou hast given us and that thou hast raised us up in comfortable circumstances this day. Give us thy day our daily bread. Watch over us for good; strengthen us for duty. Prepare us for trial

May we attempt nothing in our own strength, but all in dependence upon thy grace. May we do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to thee, the Father, through him. And to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, we ascribe the kingdom, the power, and the glory, both now and ever. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRaise—PSALM IV. 6—8.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XVI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

From the parable of the unjust steward, we learn, 1. We have all a department of service assigned us, and talents committed to our trust from God who made us, and who hath allotted us our stations in this world. 2. We are all chargeable with the neglect and abuse of the talents committed to our care. 3. We shall one day be called to give an account of our stewardship. 4. The diligence, assiduity, and ingenuity of the ungodly in prosecuting their plans for worldly gain, may put to shame the slothfulness, languor, and want of energy often manifested by the godly in pursuit of a better portion. 5. True wisdom consists in using all the good things of this life (the unrighteous mammon) so as to be made subservient to our preparation for a state of blessedness in the world to come. 6. It is impossible to make a compromise between love to the world and fidelity in the service of God; we must make our choice, whether God or the world shall reign in our hearts. 7. It is in believing the gospel that we shall obtain a victory over the world, and be brought to the love and obedience of the law.

From the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, we learn, 1. Riches often prove a great snare to prevent men from attending to the welfare of their immortal souls; while poverty and affliction prove often the means of bringing men to the great Physician of the soul. 2. At death, the soul enters upon a state of happiness or misery, according as it shall be found in a state of nature or in a state of grace at the time of death. 3. After death there can be no change from a state of misery to a state of happiness. As the tree falls so it must lie. Then he that is holy shall be holy still, and he that is filthy shall be filthy still. 4. That we may form a proper estimate of a state of prosperity and a state of adversity in this world, we must take in the whole of man's existence throughout eternity. 5. In the scriptures, which contain in themselves the evidence of their divine origin, we have all the information which God hath made needful for securing our highest interests. They are able to make us wise unto salvation. 6. If men will not be satisfied with the information given them in the scriptures, as a sure guide to lead them in the way of life, it is in vain for them to expect farther information. No more shall be given them. 7. The same obstinate hardness of heart that induces men to reject the evidence which the scriptures contain,

that they are a revelation from God, would induce them to reject any other evidence that might be given. If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us never forget that we are accountable creatures. Let us be deeply humbled before God for our neglect and abuse of the talents with which we have been intrusted. When we see men devoting all their time, and talents, and ingenuity to the gaining of a perishing portion, which they must soon part with for ever, let us be stirred up, by their example, to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, that we may be received into everlasting habitations. Let us beware of allowing the world to occupy that place in our hearts which should be kept for God. Let us be thankful that a door of mercy has been opened for us in the gospel: let us press in while the door is open, ere it be shut. Let us never forget that, while the salvation of the gospel is wholly of grace, all who receive the gospel are made holy. We do not make void the law, then, by preaching the faith of the gospel; nay, we establish the law. Let us guard against the deceitfulness of riches; if riches increase let us not set our hearts upon them. Let us not envy the rich. Let us not repine under poverty and affliction; but plead that all trials may be sanctified for our good. Let us remember that now is the time to be wise in laying up a good foundation for the time to come: there is no repentance in the grave, to which we are hastening. Let us be thankful for the scriptures, and plead earnestly for the Spirit to open our understandings to understand them; that in the daily study of the scriptures we may be daily advancing in the knowledge of the only living and true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, to know whom is life eternal.

PRAYER.

Our Father who art in heaven, we, thy dependent and sinful creatures, dwelling on this earth, thy footstool, are encouraged to lift up our hands and our hearts to thee, from whom cometh down all our aid. For though naturally we are far from thee, thou hast been graciously pleased, in the gospel of thy Son, so to draw near to us as to give us the strongest possible encouragement to draw near to thee. Pour out upon us, we humbly beseech thee, of thy Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of grace and supplications, that we may serve thee with what is of thine own giving to us. We desire, with our whole hearts, to give thanks to thee for Jesus Christ, thine unspeakable gift. And receiving him as our Saviour, we come to thee with the confidence of children to a Father. Remember us with the love that thou bearest to thine own people. O visit us with thy salvation, that we may see the goodness of thy chosen, that we may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that we may glory

with thine inheritance. Give us the dispositions of thy children. May we live blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a perverse and crooked nation, among whom may we shine as lights in the world holding forth the word of life. As thy children, may we be taught of thee. May we delight in thee as our portion. May we be active in thy service. May we be, in all things, resigned to thy disposing will. May we place all our trust under the shadow of thy wings. Thou, O Lord, hast assigned each of us our stations in this world. May we be faithful to our trust. May we, by the help of thy Spirit, discharge all the duties to which we are called, in the several stations and relations by which we are connected together. We live in a world where we are surrounded with temptations; and we have hearts deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. And may we use what thou givest us of this world as not abusing it, remembering that the fashion of this world passeth away. We thank thee, heavenly Father, that we live in a land of gospel light. May we set a high value on gospel privileges. Lead us to the right improvement of them. Thou knowest our weakness, our helplessness, our sinfulness. We look to thee for all needed help. And we rejoice to be assured from thy word, that it hath pleased thee that in Christ all fulness should dwell. May we daily receive out of his fulness even grace for grace. We thank thee, O Father of all the families of the earth, for all thy kindness to us as a family. Sanctify the relation by which we are connected as a family. Make us more and more helpful to one another. May the ties of nature be in us strengthened by the ties of grace. May we be helpers of each other's spiritual joy, and walk together as joint heirs of the grace of life. Accept, O Lord, of our thanksgiving for thy watchful care over us this day, for the supply of our returning wants, and for the measure of health which thou hast permitted us to enjoy. Take us under thy care and keeping this night. Let no evil come nigh our dwelling. Give us refreshing rest. Take the direction of our thoughts and meditations. May we awake, thankful for thy mercies, and prepared for what thou art pleased to appoint for us. Hear, in heaven, these our supplications; and when thou hearest, forgive and accept, through Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM III.

SCRIPTURE—JOSHUA VIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

1. We have powerful enemies to contend with, in this our earthly pilgrimage. 2. While we place our dependence upon Christ, we need not fear our enemies. 3. The triumphs of the wicked are but short and are just preparing the way for their destruction. The deliverances which God hath wrought for his people in former times, may be considered as pledge that, in like manner, he will fulfill to them the promises which he has given them of final deliverance from all their enemies. 4. God is pleased at time to enrich his people with the spoils of their enemies. 5. The praise of all the deliverances which we obtain is due to God. 6. In the scriptures, life and death, blessing and cursing, are plainly set before us, that we may choose the good and avoid the evil.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. We need not be afraid to enter upon services of difficulty and danger, when God calls us to them, being assured, that he will uphold us and carry us through. 2. Let us seriously contemplate the awful destruction that awaits the enemies of God; that we may dread the thought of offending God. 3. Let us put our trust in the Lord, we may rest assured that he will provide what he sees good for us. 4. Let us give God the glory of all the deliverances which he has wrought for us, and especially for the great deliverance from sin, and all its tremendous consequences, through the Lord Jesus Christ. 5. Let us be thankful for having the word of God, and the ordinances of religion, and be careful to attend upon them. 6. Let parents accustom their children to attend with them on religious ordinances.

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, we bless thy name for permitting us to draw near to thee in prayer. We are, indeed, less than the least of all thy mercies. And if thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, Lord, who shall stand? But in the Lord Jesus Christ there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. And thou hast been graciously pleased to declare to us, that thou art reconciling the world to thyself, not imputing to them their trespasses. And thou art desiring us to be reconciled to thee. We come to thee in his all-prevailing name; and give thanks to thee for thine unspeakable gift. Let him receive us graciously, and love us freely. And grant us the help of thy Holy Spirit, that we may now present to thee our souls and bodies as a living sacrifice. We acknowledge our constant and absolute dependence upon thee in every thing. Thou art the God of our lives, God of all our mercies, the God of our salvation. Impress deeply upon our minds, a sense of our

finite obligations to love and serve thee. May we be enabled to show the gratitude of our hearts, by the willing obedience of our hearts and of our lives. Write thy law upon our hearts. May we meditate on thy law day and night. Thou knowest all the trials, and dangers, and temptations to which we are exposed; and how insufficient we are, in our own strength, to resist and overcome them. May we find thy grace at all times sufficient for us, and thy strength perfected in our weakness. Deliver us from the power of sin that dwelleth in us. May we, by the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, that we may live. May we not love the world, nor the things of the world; but may thy love be shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given us. And deliver us from the cunning devices and furious assaults of the wicked one. May we resist him, depending upon thy grace, and be made more than conquerors over all our enemies, through him who loved us. We give thanks to thee, gracious Father, for all that is comfortable in our outward circumstances. Provide whatever thou seest to be good for us. May we see and acknowledge thy kind hand in all that thou bestowest upon us. May we be contented with what thou art pleased to bestow upon us. And may our great concern be to seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, assured, from thy word, that all other things needful for us shall be added. While we plead for ourselves, we plead for all with whom we stand nearly connected. We implore for them the same blessing that we ask in our own behalf. Make us more and more helpful to them; and may we seek the good of all as we have opportunity, and be disposed to take a deep interest in their spiritual welfare. Accept of our thanksgiving for the watchful care which thou hast exercised over us during the night; for the rest and refreshment which thou hast given us; and for all that is comfortable in our circumstances this day. Watch over us for good; strengthen us for duty; prepare us for trial; direct all our intercourse together for good. Be thou at our right hand, and we shall not be moved. And all that we ask is in the name, and for the sake, of thy beloved Son, our Saviour; to whom, with thee, and the Holy Spirit, one God, we ascribe the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLVIII. 4—9.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XVII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

1. We learn the deep interest which Christ takes in his people; he will assuredly take vengeance on their enemies. 2. The gospel breathes the spirit of love and good-will to men; and disposes to forbearance and forgiveness. 3. We cannot, by our best services, be profitable to God. 4. We are prone to be forgetful of God, and unthankful to God for all his mercies. 5. The destruction of the old world by the flood, and of Sodom by fire from heaven, are instructive emblems of the final destruction of the ungodly, at the coming of the Lord. 6. The coming of the Lord will be sudden and unexpected to the ungodly.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Let all beware of offending against the least of those who believe in Christ. They are dear to Christ, and he will avenge their cause. 2. Let us carefully cherish a forbearing and forgiving disposition towards our offending brethren. If God hath been graciously pleased to forgive us our manifold offences, should not we also forgive our brethren. 3. Let us plead earnestly that the Lord would increase our faith; that our faith may be always kept in lively exercise. 4. What ground of humiliation have we, that we are, at the best, unprofitable servants; that we are chargeable with innumerable transgressions of God's holy law. 5. And how ought we to be farther troubled in thinking of our unthankfulness to God, for his mercies renewed to us day by day. 6. Let us earnestly desire to have the kingdom of Christ established within us; that kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. 7. Let us, in the exercise of faith, be looking and waiting for the coming of the Lord. That day will come suddenly upon the wicked. But blessed are they that wait for him: blessed are those servants whom their Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

PRAYER.

Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, we bless thy name for being permitted to approach the footstool of thy throne of grace. Unto whom, Lord, should we go but unto thee, for thou hast the words of eternal life? We are poor, weak, and helpless creatures; but with thee all fulness and perfection dwells. We are sinful and polluted dust and ashes: and therefore, we cannot come into the presence of the infinitely holy God, in our own name and righteousness. But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. Therefore are we encouraged to hope in thee. Thou hast declared, that thou hast pleasure in them that fear thee, and hope in thy mercy, as revealed in the gospel. In Christ receive us graciously, and

love us freely. Cause thy face to shine upon us, and so we shall be saved. Holy Father, we plead that thou wouldst create in us clean hearts, and renew a right spirit within us, that thou wouldst grant us, from the fulness of Christ, abundant communications of thy Holy Spirit; that the kingdom of Christ may come within us; that kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Thus, sharing in the riches of thy grace and love, may we love our brethren with pure hearts fervently. May we cast away from us all anger, and malice, and wrath; and put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, forbearing and forgiving one another, even as thou hast, for Christ's sake, extended forgiveness to us. Fit us for usefulness in our stations. May we be earnestly desirous to see the kingdom of Christ established in the hearts of all men. Thou knowest all the trials, and dangers, and temptations, to which we are exposed, and how insufficient we are, in our own strength to resist and overcome them. Let us not lean to our own understanding, nor trust to our own strength; but may we exercise a constant dependence upon Christ. May we continually receive, out of the fulness of Christ, all the grace of which we continually stand in need. May we daily grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We acknowledge, O our God, that we are prone to forget thy mercies, and to be unthankful for the many kind interpositions of thy providence in our behalf. How often hast thou been pleased to interpose to preserve our eyes from tears, our feet from falling, and our souls from death! And yet we have soon forgotten such signal displays of thy love. But be thou pleased to impress deeply upon our minds a sense of our infinite obligations to love and serve thee. What shall we render to thee, the Lord, for all thy benefits to us? Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits. May we live to thy glory. May the gratitude of our hearts be manifested by the willing obedience of our lives. Holy Father, we earnestly entreat of thee to raise our affections above the world. As those risen with Christ, may we seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. May we often carry our thoughts forward to his second coming and glorious appearing. And as we know neither the day nor the hour when our Lord shall come, may we be found watchful and prayerful, having our loins girt about, our lamps burning, and our light shining, as those that wait for their Lord. Accept, heavenly Father, of our thanksgiving for the mercies of this

day. Pardon wherein we have offended against thee. Take us under thy protecting care during the night. Give us rest and refreshment. Take the direction of our thoughts. And when we awake, may our first thoughts ascend to thee, in adoration and praise. We leave all in thy hands. Undertake for us in every thing. And all that we ask, is in the name, and for the sake, of thy dear Son, our Saviour. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM xcvi. 9.

SCRIPTURE—JOSHUA xxiii.

REMARKS.

Joshua, the successor of Moses, the lawgiver and leader of Israel, had now reached a period far beyond the ordinary limit of human life. Warned of his approaching dissolution, this holy man, animated by an undying love for the people who had been so long under his care, and with whose wayward disposition he had had so much experience, summoned all his energies that, by a closing address, he might attest the sincerity of his interest in their welfare. How solemn and impressive is the spectacle! Joshua 'old and stricken in age,' venerable from his years but still more from his character, with 'all the elders and heads, and judges, and officers of Israel' in his presence, prepared reverently to listen to the word of the hoary warrior. A nobler interest now surrounds him than when, by his command, Jerich was invested, or when 'he said, in the sight of Israel, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, stand thou still upon the valley of Ajalon: and the sun stood still, and the moon stayed;' or when he 'cut off the Anakims and destroyed them utterly with their cities.' He is about to leave his people for ever; and he would give them this last proof that he bears on his heart their prosperity and happiness as affectionately now, as when, amid personal perils and fatigues, he fought their battles.

He begins his address by reminding them of what the Lord their God had done for them, through him, in making their enemies to fall under them and giving them their countries for a possession thus teaching them that God's dealings in time past should beget confidence for the future in that Almighty Being who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; whose ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, and whose hand is not shortened that he cannot save his people, and who would yet do great things for them.

The believer, whose experience warrants him in saying, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped me,' inwardly hears faith responding, 'He will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' One attainment leads on to another. One victory is the earnest of many more. He receives out of the fulness which is in Christ and grace for grace. Ver. 6. Joshua next counsels the people to remember that all their success are

prosperity would depend on their maintaining their allegiance to the Lord of hosts; on their entire renunciation of idolatry, and abhorrence even of the names of the false gods of the nations, and on their cleaving to the living God in love, and in trust, and unswerving obedience to all that had been commanded them. And if thus they took good heed unto themselves, they were assured of the presence of their divine protector, who would encourage their hearts, and strengthen their hands, and make them a terror to their foes in the day of battle, and go before them as their invincible leader.

The good soldier of Christ is constrained to sing, 'Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight. My goodness and my fortress, my high tower and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I trust: who subdueth my people under me.' But he knows that 'for all this God will be inquired of to do it for him.' Assured of the faithfulness of him that has promised, he holds fast the profession of his faith without wavering. He works out his salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure. For the Lord is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. The blessing is found in the way of duty, and only there; and we are forbidden to expect the divine assistance, unless we walk with God in the loving observance of all his commands, and in self-denying renunciation of ourselves. 'The hand of the diligent maketh rich,' and none but his. Ver. 12. Having placed before them the consequences of obedience, Joshua now faithfully points out the consequences of transgression.

'Knowing the terrors of the Lord,' let us be persuaded to 'remember how we have received and heard, and hold fast and repent.' It becomes us to hear with solemn attention the words of Christ: 'Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.' We are surrounded by temptations on every side. Lord, deliver us from evil, and from all 'sin, that it may not grieve us;' and preserve us unto thy heavenly kingdom.

PRAYER.

O thou who dwellest in the high and holy place, whose name is holy, unto thee do we desire to lift up our souls in humble confidence and joy. We would draw near unto thee with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed as with pure water. We rejoice that Christ Jesus, by one offering, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, and that we have now boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the rent veil of his flesh. And we would now approach thee as the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; as his God and our

God, his Father and our Father. We have abundant grounds to bless thee, O our God, for the goodness and tender mercy which thou hast made to pass before us. Unnumbered blessings were ours, ere yet we knew the hand that conferred them. Thine eye has ever been over us, and we have been the objects of thine unceasing care and unmerited bounty. Hitherto hast thou helped us. Thanks, especially, be unto thee, for thine unspeakable gift. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us. Lord, grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, may serve thee without fear, in holiness and righteousness before thee, all the days of our life. Being redeemed with the precious blood of Christ Jesus, may we feel that we are not our own, and that we are under the tenderest and the most solemn obligations to live no longer to ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again. Enable us to glorify and serve thee with our souls and our bodies, which are thine. Let thy grace be sufficient for us; make perfect thy strength in our weakness. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. May we be animated and encouraged by the promises of thy blessed word; and may we stand in awe of thy judgments. Put thy fear in our hearts, and direct them into the love of God. May we at last receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. Guide us by thy good counsel this day, and preserve us from all evil. Hear, Lord, in heaven, and send us an answer in peace, for the sake of Christ Jesus. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI. 8.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XVIII. 1—27.

REMARKS.

If we attentively consider the parable of the widow and the unjust judge, we shall find in it an argument for instant and importunate prayer, which is completely irresistible. The argument is from the lesser to the greater, like that employed in Matt. vii. 11. To perceive the force of it, we have only to contrast the character and situation of the parties. The judge neither feared God nor regarded man. He held in contempt all laws, human and divine. Neither equity, nor pity, nor fear, could move him. None, but the most hopeless and desperate, would venture to apply to him for the redress of their injuries. His client was a widow; an unprotected, helpless being. She

was injured, and had no bribe to offer as a likely means of securing the favour of a judge who had proved himself to be insensible to every thing else. But her distress overcame her fear, and urged her to hope against hope, and kept up her heart under each successive repulse, until she fairly exhausted the patience of the judge, who, to get rid of her importunity, avenged her of her adversary. The conclusion to be drawn by us is obvious. If the unrighteous judge, who neither feared God nor revered man, was intreated, by the importunity of a poor, despised widow, to do her justice, how much more will a righteous and merciful God be intreated to relieve his dear children, whom he so loved that he gave his well-beloved Son to die for them; and with whose necessities he is perfectly acquainted, before they make them known. In wisdom, God may delay to answer the prayers of his elect; but they are not forgotten. He loves to be sought and waited on in prayer by his people; and 'he will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.' O what encouragement have God's people to go, 'in full assurance of faith,' to the throne of grace; to 'pray without ceasing,' and not to be dejected, because deliverance does not come at the time and in the way they wish. Their Father hears, and will assuredly answer in his own good time, which is the best. In the parable of the pharisee and the publican, we have very clear and impressive directions regarding the duty of prayer. There is a natural tendency in the human heart to trust in its own righteousness. Even the most highly sanctified have frequent occasion to complain of its power. It is here depicted in all its hideousness, in the conduct of the self-righteous pharisee. In the conduct of the despised publican, again, we recognise the genuine pattern which Christians should imitate. Here was humility, and self-abasement, and entire renunciation of all self-merit. He was content to be thought a sinner, for he felt his unworthiness and guilt; and all he prays for is mercy. Our sole confidence must be in the free, unmerited mercy of our heavenly Father, through his Son Christ Jesus.

The incident of the little children brought to Christ, afforded occasion for a deeply important lesson. We must all become as little children, that is, be full of implicit, unquestioning confidence, loving attachment, docility, and openness to conviction before we can receive Christ, as 'the Lord our righteousness.' A dutiful child easily surrenders itself to the teaching and guidance of an affectionate parent. We must thus be 'born again,' else we shall never enter into a kingdom which is appointed for the 'meek,' the 'poor in spirit,' the 'pure in heart.' This is a 'hard saying' to the natural man, but it is the first lesson we receive in the school of Christ; and when once thoroughly learned, all the others become easy.

In the account of the ruler who came to Christ, ignorantly inquiring the way to eternal life, we are furnished with an exemplification of the absence of this childlike disposition. He came with all the pride and self-confidence of the natural man in full operation. He would be saved in his own way, and through his own endeavours. He could not comply

with the terms which Christ proposed. His possessions were dear to him, and he could not surrender them, trusting to Christ for a recompence. He went away sorrowful. Self-renunciation and self-devotion, are still the terms proposed to those who would enter into life. They must renounce all for the sake of Christ. They must know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

PRAYER.

Holy and heavenly Father, we come before thee this evening, adoring thee as the great fountain of life and happiness, the Creator and preserver of men. Thou art the eternal Jehovah whose dwelling is in light unapproachable. Thou art of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity, the heavens are not clean in thy sight, and thou chargest thine angels with folly. How, then, shall man, who drinketh iniquity like water, come into thy presence, or take thy holy name in his lips. Our hearts, by natural and original corruption, are unclean and alienated from thee and to our inherited sins we have added the burden of many actual transgressions. We have lived unmindful of the God who made us at first in his own image; we have lightly esteemed thy Rock of our salvation; and we have grieved thy good Spirit by our impenitence. Thou hast nourished and brought us up as children, and we have rebelled against thee. We have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and are no more worthy to be called thy children. We rejoice in the encouragement given to thy children to confess their sins, and in the assurance that thou art faithful and just to forgive them, and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness. We might justly have been deprived of the privilege of prayer, as well as of our other privileges, for we have too much abused them. Thou hast invited us to ask that we may receive, and see that we may find, and knock that it may be opened to us, but we have been cold, and careless, and dead, in spiritual duties. We have not been importunate in prayer, and therefore we have received little. Nor have we been humble under a sense of our great unworthiness in thy sight. We have too often been actuated by the spirit of the pharisee, and have valued ourselves on our attainments in the life of grace. How little of the disposition of children and of the spirit of adoption do we entertain. O that our faith in thee were even as a grain of mustard seed, that we might be enabled to plead for its increase. O that thou wouldst teach us self-denial, deadness, and crucifixion to the world and thorough devotedness to the cause of our blessed Redeemer. May we be enabled to give all diligence, and to add to our faith virtue, and

knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly-kindness, and charity; that these things being in us and abounding, we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We would humbly bless thee for all the unmerited mercies of the past week, and of this day; and we implore the pardon of all our sins of heart and life. We would commit ourselves, and all who are dear to us, to thy watchful care during the night. We pray for the spread of the gospel: let thy kingdom come in power and in glory. If thou art pleased to spare us, may we be sanctified for the duties of the Lord's-day, and receive from thee the preparation of the heart. Hear, O Lord, and when thou hearest, forgive, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SIXTEENTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLVIII. 10.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS XLVIII. XLIX.

REMARKS.

PSALM XLVIII. This psalm, originally composed as a song of praise, for some signal defeat of the enemies of Zion, has justly been viewed as bearing a secondary but infinitely more important application. Under the image of Jerusalem, the city of the great king, in which the power and majesty of Jehovah were displayed, is described the church of Christ; in which all fulness of the divine grace and power is manifested with peculiar splendour. God created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. In the church, then, founded on the rock of ages, and raised up for the admiring contemplation of the world, God is greatly to be feared and praised. Here, he discovers himself to his people in all his holiness, condescension and love. And the time is coming when it shall be literally true, that the church shall be the parent of joy and peace to the 'whole earth;' when there shall be but one sheep-fold, as there is but one Shepherd. Against this church 'the gates of hell shall not prevail.' Christ loved it, and gave himself for it; and whoever 'touches it, touches the apple of his eye.' He has all power, and will protect it against the attacks of its foes; the ungodly may combine, infidels may rage, satan may raise up persecution; but terror and desolation shall come upon them all. Who shall contend with the Lord, and prosper? The hearts of the godly may be comforted, from all they have seen of the fulfilment of the 'sure word of prophecy,' and confidently anticipate the fulfilment of all that has been predicted as 'the glory of the latter day.' In this anticipation we should rejoice. Our fervent

and daily prayer should be, 'Thy kingdom come. And as we are graciously permitted to be fellow-workers together with God, it becomes us well to ponder wherein the great strength of the church lies, that we may lend a helping-hand to the furtherance of its interests, that its invaluable blessings may not only be enjoyed by ourselves, but secured to the latest generation; relying, as we do, on the promise that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 'is our God for ever and ever.' 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

PSALM XLIX. The ways of providence, without the light of revelation, are often an inexplicable mystery. Judging from appearances, it would seem better to 'eat, drink, and be merry' with the worldly, than to suffer for righteousness' sake, with the pious and the poor. The psalmist, fully aware of the difficulties by which the theme is surrounded, shows the inefficacy of riches to preserve their possessor from the fate of fools, and of the meanest of the people. Riches and large possessions may confer temporal splendour and gratification upon those who are incapable of higher enjoyments; but death levels all distinctions, and throws bitter mockery upon all the grandeur, wealth, and honours of the world. Riches often prove a snare in life; they are of no service at death, and we cannot carry them hence. Ancient families disappear, their titles become extinct, their very memory is sunk in oblivion. And yet men will not be instructed; but generation after generation continues to pursue a shadow, by seeking permanent happiness in that, which, from its very nature, is incapable of filling the capacities of a soul, which is ethereal and immortal. When will men be wise!

But the righteous hath hope in his death; a hope that maketh not ashamed, and full of the coming glory of the resurrection morn. He may be persecuted by the wicked, and oppressed by poverty here; 'but through union with him who is 'the resurrection and the life,' he shall hereafter be raised in glory, to the possession of a kingdom which is undefiled and imperishable. The certainty of this may well enable him to 'possess his soul in patience.' Let us ever 'look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

PRAYER.

Our Father which art in heaven! we, thy humble worshippers, would approach thee, on this the morning of thy holy day, with the voice of thanksgiving and praise. This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoice in it. May we be in the spirit, and find pleasure and profit in meditating on the things that belong to our peace; and may we become holier, better, and happier, in waiting upon the Lord, in the observance of religious ordinances. We would bear solemnly in mind, that on this day Christ the Lord arose from the dead, the first fruits of them that slept; that he, who was

crucified in weakness, was raised in power: for thou didst not leave his soul in hell, neither didst thou suffer thy holy One to see corruption. Triumphant over sin and death, the Redeemer ascended on high, leading captivity captive, receiving gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them. And we rejoice that, though now at the right hand of the heavenly throne, he has not forgotten his faithful people on earth; and in faith we would receive his own blessed assurance, In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. May we, through grace, feel the power of Christ's resurrection upon our own souls. Being risen with him, may we seek the things which are above. Forbid that our affections should be set on the perishing enjoyments of this world, when the best treasure of our hearts is in heaven, and our glorified Redeemer has ascended to prepare a place for us in his own kingdom; a place of rest and peace, where we shall see, and praise, and adore him for ever; a place of joy and everlasting fruition, where we shall love, and possess, and delight in him for ever. O that we had the wings of a dove, that we might escape from all the allurements and temptations of this vain and sinful world, and meditate, with unbroken tranquillity, on all that has been done for our souls' eternal interests. May he, who holds the seven stars in his right hand, be graciously present with all his faithful servants this day, to enable them rightly to divide the word of truth; and let thy light be sent forth along with the truth, to make it effectual for the great purposes of awakening, comforting, and edifying. Let the joy of the Lord be the strength of all his people. Make them all joyful in thy house of prayer. Give a portion in season to those who are laid on beds of languishing and sickness. Arouse and enlighten those who care for none of the things of thy sanctuary. And let the everlasting arms especially be around us, both this day, and all the days of our lives; and at last, may we be admitted into that temple whence there is no going out; for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM L. (*Second Version.*)

SCRIPTURE—PSALM L.

REMARKS.

This psalm is to be viewed, primarily, as a solemn and sublime remonstrance on the part of Jehovah, with his covenanted people Israel, on account of their carnality of mind and wickedness of life, in which judgments, in case of impenitence, are threatened, and encouragements held out to lead them to repentance. The 'Mighty God' is represented as summoning the heavens and the earth to attend, while he pleaded with, and testified against, his people. The judgment is set, and the trial proceeds. The criminals are not charged with neglecting the external legal sacrifices, for in this respect they had been zealous above measure; but with trusting in them for acceptance with God, while they forgot the weightier matters of the law, to 'do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God.' They substituted a multitude of sacrifices, vain oblations, incense, new moons, sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, and appointed feasts, for purity, justice, and charity. Their hands, in the meanwhile, were full of cruelty, oppression and blood. They are reminded, that even the sacrifices which they offered by divine authority, had no intrinsic power to purify the soul, or any inherent value in the sight of God. The animals used in sacrifice were not their own, but God's, whose is the world and the fulness thereof; and who, had he so pleased, might have required 'every beast of the forest, and all the fowls of the mountains' to be devoted upon his altar. God, moreover, is a Spirit; and though man's life, from its infirmity and tendency to decay, requires continual sustenance; he, by whom the whole world is quickened, is infinitely exalted above all such creature-wants, and can regard with approbation, legal sacrifices only, because of the spiritual affections—the faith and love of those who offered them, in obedience to his will. They are further reminded of their gross violations of the divine law, in which course they had been emboldened through the abuse of the divine long-suffering; they are warned, that unless they repented, vengeance would come upon them, when there should be none found able to deliver; and finally, they are taught, that the acceptable worshipper must unite a spirit of humble sincere gratitude to a life of unspotted purity.

The best interpreters are agreed, that this psalm contains a clear prophetic announcement of events in gospel times, as well as a figurative description of the final judgment, when every man shall receive according to his works.

The promulgation of the law from Sinai was as the dawning of that light which shone forth gloriously from Zion, a light to lighten the Gentile world, and the glory of Israel; and the ruin that overtook the carnal unbelieving Jews, for their rejection of Messiah, in the destruction of their temple and nation, is to be viewed as an emblem of that more fearful ruin which will overtake all, who, trusting in their

nominal Christianity and good works, do not come to God through the new and living way, to serve him in spirit and in truth. Professing Christians, whose conduct is inconsistent with their principles, have great need to remember, that, whatever may be the place and the honour they enjoy in the church now, there is a day coming when the mask shall be taken off, and their hypocrisy and wickedness shall be exposed before the universe. Let us 'not be deceived, for God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap. Let us not be weary in well-doing; for, in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.'

PRAYER.

Almighty, and all-blessed God! enable us to come before thee, on this the evening of thy holy day, with that reverential awe which becomes the creature addressing his Creator. May we be impressed by the thought that we have forfeited every claim upon thy bounty, and that by nature we are the children of wrath even as others. May we remember, in all our approaches to thy throne, that it is only through the sacrifice and merits of thine only and well-beloved Son, that we can offer up our supplications to a Being who to the wicked is a consuming fire; and that, as there is only one God, the hearer of prayer, so there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. We bless thee that a way of access has been opened by the blood of the cross, by which guilty and ruined sinners can come, and ask mercy to pardon, and grace to help in the time of need; and that, though far from thee by nature, we are brought nigh, and reconciled, and adopted into thy family. Enable us, at this time, to look in faith to him whom our sins pierced, and mourn, as one mourneth for an only son, and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. And do thou bring us to the fount of cleansing, that we may be sprinkled from all our filthiness, and all our idols. Wash us, and we shall be whiter than the snow. Create in us a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within us. May we win Christ, and be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith, that we may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. May we be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his right arm, putting on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the wicked one, and to cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. May

we know the blessedness of that man whose transgression is forgiven, and unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. And may the love of Christ constrain us thus to judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again. May we be enabled to evidence the reality of our faith, by the purity of our practice. May we daily put off the old man, with all his deeds. Whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue and any praise, on these things may we meditate, and these things may we do. And this one thing may we do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, may we press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We adore and bless thy name, heavenly Father, for the renewed opportunities granted us this day of waiting upon thee in the sanctuary. Seal good impressions on our hearts, confirm pious resolutions, and give unto us all more of thy Holy Spirit. Pardon our many sins and short-comings in all our duties. Greatly bless and prosper all the means employed for extending the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom. Let thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. We would commit ourselves, our relations and friends, to thy watchful care during the silent night. In life, and in death, and throughout eternity, may we ever be with thee. Lord, hear, forgive, and do to us and for us, more than we can ask, or even think, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 165.

SCRIPTURE—JOSHUA XXIV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Of the truths implied or expressed in this chapter, the following may be specially noticed. Ver. 2—13. The mercies received from God, ought to be remembered and reviewed. As here, there are mentioned the call of Abraham, the legation of Moses, the emancipation of the Hebrews, their guidance through the wilderness, triumph over their foes, and final establishment in Canaan: so our souls should bless the Lord, and not forget any of his benefits. These mercies constitute a ground of appeal and an argument for obedience. Ver. 14. It were base ingratitude to withhold our service from him, who has done so much for us. Ver. 15. There ought to be no halting in our decision respecting religion. As

there is no reasonable ground of hesitation between the competing claims of the masters who demand our obedience, so it is 'to-day' only that we are sure of an opportunity of making a choice. Ver. 14, 15. God will accept only a sincere, willing, undivided homage, one springing from a filial fear, rendered with an upright heart, and consecrated to him alone. We ought individually to form and avow the resolution of adhering in all circumstances to the service of God, and recommending it to others. Ver. 15. It were dastardly to conceal our principles; and the apostasy or hostility of others should excite us to greater boldness and decision. There is an intimate connection between personal and family religion. Ver. 15. When parents are pious, it will be their aim to teach also their 'house to serve the Lord.' There is an inveterate aversion in the human heart to the service of God. Ver. 19. It lies under a moral inability, in consequence of its corruption; which, so far from being an apology for disobedience, is itself exceeding sinful. Ver. 20—22. Those who bely their profession, and apostatise from God's service, are peculiarly criminal and condemnable. Ver. 26, 27. We ought faithfully to keep in remembrance the vows we have taken: and to beware of allowing our impressions to evaporate, and our resolutions to fail.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

On ourselves, let us now bring these truths to bear. Many and precious are the benefits which the Almighty has lavished on our ancestors, and on ourselves. Early in our land was the darkness of heathenism dispelled by the light of Christianity. Rapidly was the dominion of popery overthrown. Long have liberty, and peace, and plenty, had their abode among us. And, individually, what experience have we had of the kindness of our heavenly Father, in the bounties of his providence, and the riches of his grace! Well indeed may all that is within us be stirred up to bless his holy name. Surely the mercies of God ought to persuade us to present ourselves living sacrifices unto him, and the love of Christ to constrain us to live, not unto ourselves but unto him. And why should we halt between two opinions? We cannot say that it is evil to serve the Lord. Our consciences bear testimony that the reverse is true. And as there is no reason for hesitation, so there is no room for delay. But let us remember that our service, in order to its being acceptable, must be voluntary, sincere, and cordial. Nor should we be satisfied with aiming ourselves at the rendering of such a service. We should recommend it to others, and especially encourage one another in it, that so this house may enjoy the peculiar blessing of the God of Israel's families. And if our inability be manifested by every effort, let us thereby be urged to implore the promised influence of the Spirit.

PRAYER.

In coming into thy presence, O Lord, this morning, we would express our gratitude to thee for thine innumerable mercies. Though thou art a holy and jealous God, and we have

done much to provoke thee to anger, yet thou hast loaded us daily with thy benefits. We have heard with our ears, O God, our father have told us what works thou didst in their days in the times of old. So graciously hast thou defended, so abundantly prospered, and so richly privileged our land, that we may well say, thou hast not dealt so with any other people. And when we look back on all the way thou hast led us through the wilderness, we see reason at every step of our pilgrimage to set up our Ebenezer and acknowledge, 'hitherto hath the Lord helped us.' Thanks be to thee for all thy gifts, but especially for thine unspeakable gift. Ever would we magnify thy name, because thou didst not spare thine own Son, but didst deliver him up, and didst, by his obedience unto death, make full provision for our salvation. Yet how ungratefully have we requited thee. We have not rendered again unto thee according to the benefits done unto us. We have been forgetful of thy loving kindness, and shamefully insensible to its claims. Yea, we have rebelled against thee, and have preferred the service of sin and Satan to thy holy and blessed service. But still O Lord, would we hope in thy mercy. Do thou graciously forgive our transgressions; and enable us to yield ourselves unreservedly to thee, as thy willing and faithful servants. To long have we served other masters, but we would henceforth be for the Lord alone. Do thou bestow thy grace, for of ourselves we can do nothing; incline us to choose thee with our whole heart as our God, and to consecrate all the talents thou hast given us to thy service and glory. Sprinkle clean water upon us, and we shall be clean from all our filthiness, and from all our idols do thou cleanse us; a new heart also do thou give us, and thy Spirit do thou put within us, that we may walk in thy statutes and keep thy judgments, and do them. O forbid that we should ever attempt to serve God and mammon. May we have courage to avow ourselves thy servants, whatever temptations we encounter, and whatever defections we witness. And in the exercise of Christian love, let us strive to advance the salvation of our brethren, and such especially are near and dear to us. Grant, O God, a revival of family religion throughout the land. Let an altar be erected to thee in every dwelling: and let the young be trained up in the nature and admonition of the Lord. Follow with thy blessing the holy services of yesterday. Let the impressions then made, be preserved and deepened; the resolutions then formed, be remembered and executed. May we spend the

new day under a livelier sense of our obligations to thee. And O grant, that when we come to die, we may be found to have finished the work given us to do, and may obtain an abundant entrance into heaven. And all that we ask, is for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XVIII. 28—43.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In the first division of this portion of scripture, ver. 28—30. we are taught that men are prone to boast of their services, however trifling and imperfect. Some degree of self-complacency seems to have sprung up in the apostle's breast, as he contrasted his surrender of all he had for Christ, with the departure from him of the amiable ruler, who was required to part with his possessions: and thus his pride frequently cherished by an unwise comparison of ourselves with one another. We are taught also, that every service done to Christ, whatever sacrifice it may cost, shall be abundantly recompensed. A decided adherence to him may subject to severe trials, but an ample compensation is provided in the peace and hope which he imparts even on earth, and especially in the felicity he will bestow in heaven. In the second division, ver. 31—34. we have an illustration and evidence of the presence, and fortitude, and generosity of Christ. His presence appears in his clear prediction of the contumacious and cruel treatment he should experience, together with his resurrection: his fortitude, in his advancing steadfastly to that city which he knew would be the scene of his sufferings, and his announcing their approach without any indication of fear: his generosity also, in his willingly submitting to such shame and agony, for the purpose of achieving man's redemption. The following truths, besides, are involved in the third division, ver. 35—43. ver. 37. No tidings are comparable to the news of the Redeemer's coming. Ver. 38. Divine mercy is the source of every blessing. Ver. 39. Importunity and perseverance should characterize our prayers for deliverance. Ver. 39. Opposition is to be expected in making application to the Saviour. Ver. 40—42. Sooner or later the Lord will graciously listen to the cry for mercy. Ver. 42. Faith is the great instrument by which benefits are received from the hand of the Redeemer. Ver. 43. Obedience and praise ought to be the result of every interposition of providence or grace, in behalf of ourselves or others.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

What matter of thankfulness is there, in our being exempted from the fiery trials to which the apostles, and many of our ancestors, were exposed! The following of Christ, however, still demands the bearing of the cross. Yet well may every friend and object be parted with, that comes into competition

with our love and duty to him: for what are they all, in comparison of the present blessedness and the future glory which he guarantees to his faithful disciples? How strong also are the claims which he has on our devoted homage! For our salvation, he submitted to all those bitter sufferings which issued in his death. And as the full prospect of these did not prevent him in heaven from undertaking our cause, nor on earth from prosecuting it, so he generously bore them all, that he might redeem us from ruin. Worthy therefore is he of all the love wherewith our hearts can glow, and all the service which our lives can render. But this we cannot yield of ourselves. We labour naturally under a blindness and poverty, far more distressing than the loss of eye-sight and the want of means. But Jesus is even now passing by, and will not disdain the cry for mercy. Let us, therefore, breaking through every entanglement, spread out our wants before him. And having received an answer to our petition, let us unite in magnifying his name, and following his footsteps, till we come to see his glory in the light of heaven.

PRAYER.

O Lord, our God, we would bow before thee this evening, with reverence and gratitude, for thou art infinitely worthy to be feared and praised. Thou hast made us capable of beholding thy glory in thy works; and whithersoever we turn our eyes, we see the manifestations of thy wisdom, and power, and goodness. In ourselves also, whom thou hast fearfully and wonderfully made, in the preservation of our bodily and mental powers, and in the countless comforts of our lot, we discern the striking tokens of thy benevolence. But especially, O Lord, do we behold the display of all thine attributes, and chiefly of thine infinite love, in the work of our redemption. When we call to mind, that thou didst send thine own Son into the world to be our substitute and surety, that by thy determinate counsel, though by wicked hands, he was subjected to every variety of suffering and sorrow, and that at length he was made a sacrifice for sin; our souls would magnify thee, and would celebrate the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain. And we would rejoice in the assurance, that he who was crucified is now enthroned, and that he who died to make atonement, ever liveth to make intercession. But alas! we are naturally insensible to this revelation of thy character. We are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our hearts. And even after becoming disciples, our obedience is so partial and polluted, that we must confess ourselves unprofitable servants. Therefore would we implore thee to have mercy upon us. As thou didst at first command the light to shine out of darkness,

thou now shine in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. Open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of thy law: and in the marvellous light of the gospel, let us see the loveliness, and feel the preciousness, and experience the attraction of the Saviour. Make us willing to forfeit every friendship, and sacrifice every interest, rather than part from him. While we praise him for the benefits we receive, may we go after him in the course of holiness: and may his exceeding great and precious promises excite us to follow him through bad as well as good report. And grant, O God, that we may now experience the everlasting consolation and good hope through grace of thy people, and may be made meet in due time for the glory of heaven. Have compassion on those in other lands who are yet sitting in darkness, and those in our own, whom the God of this world hath blinded, so that they believe not. Have compassion also on the poor and afflicted: and make us willing, according to our ability, to relieve and comfort them. Watch over us during the night: and if raised up by thy providence on a new day, may it be spent in thy fear. O hear us for the sake of Jesus, to whom we would ascribe everlasting praise. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 57.

SCRIPTURE—JUDGES II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. A fearful time of reckoning for sin shall assuredly arrive. As the angel of the Lord, who was the Son of God, said to the Israelites, 'ye have not obeyed my voice, why have ye done this?' so will he at length, as judge, call all transgressors to account for their disobedience. Ver. 3. Iniquity uniformly entails punishment. By allowing the Canaanites to remain, the Israelites were tempted to sin, and subjected to suffering; and thus is disobedience always productive of misery here, while it exposes to the wrath of God for ever. Ver. 4. It is the design of the rebuke and chastisement which God administers, to bring to repentance. Ver. 5. There may be much profession of penitence, while the heart is still unchanged. The place where the people were rebuked was called 'Bochim,' or 'the weepers,' on account of the many tears they shed; yet their after conduct showed that there was but little of true repentance among them. Ver. 10—13. The most highly favoured are prone to forget the mercies of God and to fall into sin, so that nothing but divine grace can preserve those even who live in the midst of privilege. Ver. 14, 15. The apos-

tacy of privileged professors is peculiarly offensive to God, and exposes to the inflictions of his hottest anger. Ver. 16, 18. God is rich in goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; being unwilling to afflict, and ready to pardon and relieve. Again and again, as the Hebrew constitution made no provision for a permanent governor, did he raise up persons, called judges, who, in consequence of achieving some emancipation, were invested with the government, and became the destroyers of idolatry and promoters of religion, as well as deliverers of the state. Ver. 17, 19. Mankind are ever prone to abuse the divine patience—to forget the design, and efface the impressions of affliction, as soon as it is removed. Ver. 20—23. The incurring of God's anger involves the forfeiture of every privilege, and subjection to the power of our enemies.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

There is abundant reason for deep humiliation in the retrospect of our conduct. We have been the recipients of many mercies, but have not rendered again unto the Lord according to the benefits done unto us. Our consciences, responding to the charges of God's word, accuse us of innumerable and aggravated sins, while they forbid us to attempt our own vindication. So that well may we shed the tears of godly sorrow. And it is to reduce us to penitence, that we are rebuked and chastened of the Lord. He reproves us in his word, and afflicts us in his providence, to bring us back to him with the relings of the returning prodigal. Such repentance, however, only is genuine as is followed by a real and thorough reformation. We must justify our profession by bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. And let us remember that if it be otherwise, we expose ourselves pre-eminently to the wrath of God. He indeed may bear long with us, and still in compassion load us with his benefits; his goodness being designed, as well as his severity, to lead us to repentance. But if we refuse to 'cease from our own doings, and from our stubborn way,' what is to be expected but abandonment to all that is evil? Let us therefore seek the Lord with supplication and weeping; and, in dependence on his grace, join ourselves to him in a perpetual covenant, not to be forgotten.

PRAYER.

O thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, and who art most high over all the earth, we would rejoice in our privilege of worshipping thee. The gods which the heathens worship are dumb idols; they cannot hear or help their votaries. But thou art the living and the true God. Thou hast created the heavens and the earth. Thy kingdom ruleth over all, and what thou pleasest that thou doest in heaven, and on earth, and in all deep places. To thee also belong all perfection and excellence; and from thee are derived all goodness and blessedness. Unto thy name, therefore, alone would we render the humble tribute of our prayer and praise. And yet, O Lord, well may we be ashamed and blush to lift

up our faces before thee. Thou hast nourished us and brought us up as children, but we have rebelled against thee. We have experienced the riches of thy goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, but we have thence taken occasion to sin against thee more heinously. We have forsaken thee, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out unto ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. We are by nature sold under sin, yea, we have sold ourselves into the hands of our enemies; and the more we are tried by temptation, the more deceitful and wicked are our hearts proved to be. Surely it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not. O teach us, gracious God, to humble ourselves before thee, and to sorrow for our sins after a godly sort. Give us that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, that needeth not to be repented of. May we know the evil and bitterness of sin; and under an apprehension of thy mercy in Christ Jesus, return to thee with our whole heart. And forbid, Lord, that our goodness should be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew, which soon goeth away. May we bring forth fruit meet for repentance, and daily grow in grace, and have our path as that of the just, be like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Sensible of our own guilt and weakness, we would bless thee for that fulness of merit and grace which it hath pleased thee should dwell in Christ, and would entreat thee, for his sake, to forgive our manifold iniquities, and to enable us in time to come to do thy holy will. Surrounded as we are by spiritual enemies on every side, we beseech thee for thine effectual aid. May we ever fight the good fight of faith; may we overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and be more than conquerors through him that loved us. Have mercy, O Father, upon our brethren. Hear the groanings of the afflicted. Supply the wants of the needy. Redress the wrongs of the injured. And reveal thyself graciously to every mourning spirit. Grateful for thy watchfulness over us by night, we cast ourselves anew on thy care. Keep us in thy fear all the day long. And O be thou our present and everlasting portion, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM xcvi. 1.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE xix. 1—27.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 2. The most unlikely persons are sometimes selected as monuments of the riches of divine mercy, and the power of divine grace. The office, and the wealth, and the character of Zaccheus, formed a three-fold barrier in the way of his conversion, yet was he effectually called. Ver. 3, 4. The mere indulgence of an idle curiosity has often been overruled for bringing sinners to the knowledge and belief of the truth. As the publican, having sought to see Jesus, under the influence of such a principle, was called: so many have been savingly arrested, while looking into the Bible, or attending the church from vain and even vicious motives. Ver. 5. The Lord knoweth them that are his. Zaccheus was noticed in the sycamore-tree, as Nathaniel was under the fig-tree. Ver. 7. The operations of divine grace are offensive to the self-conceited and self-righteous. Ver. 8. True repentance involves a change of character, and issues in a change of conduct. The penitent cannot fail to make restitution of what they have unjustly acquired, and to be addicted to charity towards the poor. Ver. 10. The grand design of Christ's advent is to save the lost: and that is, by nature, the character of all. Ver. 12, 13. In the parable, certain talents are committed to all, to be used in the service of Christ. Ver. 14. Men are naturally averse to his authority. They say by their deeds, if not with their tongues, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' Ver. 15. A time of reckoning shall at length arrive. Jesus has gone to heaven, but he shall return as judge. Ver. 16—19. The services of Christians ought to be proportional to their advantages: and their rewards shall be proportionable to their services. Ver. 20—23. Mere slothfulness is as ruinous as positive rebellion. The idle servant was condemned as well as the avowed enemy. Ver. 24—26. All the excuses of sinners will at length appear futile. Their very pleas will be turned into matter of condemnation. Ver. 27. The destruction of the wicked is certain, and shall be tremendous.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How blessed is that announcement from the lips of our Lord himself: 'the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.' Surely when our condition is so wretched and hopeless, as to be emphatically characterized by the term 'lost,' there ought to be no delay in our application to him. Difficulties indeed, and entanglements, there are in the way. But there is abundant encouragement also. Lost though we are, Jesus is seeking, as he is sufficient, to save us: and sinners though we are, he is willing to be our guest, and bless us with his fellowship. Let us therefore go where he may be seen, and 'receive him joyfully.' But be it remembered, that in accepting his salvation, all sin must be renounced, and a course of self-denial and sanctity begun. Talents have been committed to us by him,

with the solemn charge, 'occupy till I come,' and it is not permitted us, either in avowed enmity to rebel against his government, or in hollow profession to be slothful and profitless; for in either case, we should entail his rebuke and wrath. Our talents ought to be laid out in diligent obedience to his authority, and habitual expectation of his speedy return. And if it be so, then, at his second advent, though our ability be from his grace, and our acceptance through his merit, we shall obtain a great reward. But alas! for the fate of others: for their excuses shall be vain, and their punishment dreadful, in 'that day.'

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, let us have access to thee at this time, through Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, and give us the sweet and satisfying privilege of fellowship while we call on thy name. We would now present ourselves living sacrifices unto thee, which is our reasonable service. From thee are all our talents derived. Thou hast bestowed on us many powers and privileges, many means and opportunities of usefulness. And blessed be thy name, that, as thou hast commanded us to lay them out in thy service, thou art a gracious Master, and requirest of us nothing which thou art not willing to enable us to perform. And yet alas! we have multiplied our iniquities against thee. We are sinners by nature and by practice. With our lives, if not with our lips, we have often said, 'we are our own, who is Lord over us?' and yielding to the temptations of the world, we have, instead of consecrating all thy gifts to thy glory, either openly rebelled, or secretly disobeyed. And in consequence, O Lord, we desire to feel that we are lost, deserving of thy wrath, and unable to redeem our souls from destruction. But we rejoice to know, that thy Son came to seek and to save such as we are: and that, having shed his precious blood, to open for us the way of salvation, his language still is, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him, and sup with him, and he with me.' O help us then, we pray thee, to welcome Jesus into our hearts, in faith and love. May we receive him joyfully, and make him all our desire, that he may be all our salvation. May our dependence be alone on his finished righteousness. And grant, O God, that while we glory in his cross, we may bow to his sceptre. May we be willing to have him to reign over us. Whether it be little or much that we are intrusted with, may we have grace to be faithful: and instead of being wicked and slothful servants, let us occupy affectionately and diligently all the talents thou hast committed to us. We would keep in mind the se-

cond and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. To the time of his return may we daily look forward, and be giving diligence, that we may be found of the Lord in peace when he cometh. O do thou cause salvation to come to this house. May we all be interested in the everlasting covenant: and being united in the bonds of Christian love, be prepared for dwelling with our Saviour in heaven. And grant that thy kingdom may immediately appear, and speedily come over all the earth. Be our guardian by night as thou hast been by day. May our sleep be refreshing; and being raised up by thy good providence on a new morning, may our lives be devoted to thy service. Hear us in heaven, and exceed all our requests, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM L. 4. (*Second Version.*)

SCRIPTURE—JUDGES IV.

REMARKS.

During the life of Ehud, the Israelites had been, by his authority and example, in a great measure reclaimed and preserved from those sins to which they were so prone. His death was followed by their return to the open commission of evil. And national degeneracy was the precursor and the cause of national judgments. The judgments of God awakened the Israelites to a sense of their sinfulness, and excited them to pray to him in whose sight they had done evil, and who alone was able to deliver them from that state of oppression to which they had been subjected. Their cry was heard, and the Lord in his mercy raised up Deborah the prophetess, to be their instructor and judge. To her, the Lord made known his purpose to interpose for their deliverance. In effecting their deliverance, Barak was invested with the command of ten thousand men. In the district to which he was directed to lead the army Heber the Kenite resided. And the statement that he 'had severed himself from the Kenites,' is a proof that the exhortation of Moses (Num. x. 29—32.) to Hobab, from whom Heber was a descendant, had been complied with, whilst the fact that the descendants of Hobab had increased in number, wealth and influence to such a degree, that their alliance was courted by the king of Canaan, demonstrates that the promise by which the exhortation was enforced had been literally fulfilled. The movements and position of Barak and his army, having been announced to the captain of the host of the king of Canaan, the forces of the kingdom were marshalled. In the conflict that ensued, there was put forth, on behalf of the Israelites, a power which worldly men do not recognise in human affairs. 'The Lord discomfited Sisera and all his chariots, and all his horses. Sisera sought personal safety in flight. He was run

by Jael the wife of Heber, who proffered him a refuge and treated him with hospitality, but afterwards slew him. Her conduct in putting him to death, is not to be ascribed to revenge, neither was it dictated exclusively, or chiefly, by patriotism. It was an act in accordance with the will of God; it was performed under the influence of a divine impulse, and it is expressly commended in scripture. Chap. vi. 24—27. In the death of Sisera by the hand of Jael, the announcement delivered at the commencement of the enterprise, which Barak was summoned to undertake, received its accomplishment.

The following truths are illustrated in this portion of sacred history, and are among the lessons which we ought to derive from it. 1. The death of men of eminent station, who adorned that station by their personal excellencies, and who repressed immorality by their authority and example, is a severe and public calamity. 2. When wickedness becomes general in a community, and immoralities are so prevalent as to constitute the national character, the Lord is provoked to send national judgments. 3. The infliction of wide-spread calamities, the depression of a state by its enemies and the ravages of war, are indications of God's displeasure. 4. Amidst all the judgments which God inflicts, he ever watches over his church, and seasonably interposes to call his people to repentance, by raising up his servants to instruct them. 5. In national conflicts, Jehovah, as the moral governor of nations, determines the issue. 6. God punishes the wicked who harden themselves against him, and who oppress his people. 7. The wisest instruments are made effective, when God employs them for executing his purposes.

PRAYER.

O Lord God of Israel, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Thy works are perfect, and thy ways are judgment. Thou art a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right art thou. But we, thy subjects, have rebelled against thee. In thy sight we have done evil. We have provoked thee, the holy One to anger. May the revelation of thy wrath against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, duly affect our consciences. May we, from thy judgments inflicted on thy people of old, and from the punishment of their oppressors, and from thy judgments with which at any time we or others are visited, learn righteousness. May the instructions addressed to us in thy word, be by us received and improved. Be merciful to our unrighteousness; our sins and iniquities do thou remember no more. Through the righteousness of the Redeemer may we be freely justified; by thy Spirit may we be sanctified. On the path of duty which thou hast prescribed, however difficult and arduous it may be, may we enter, and in it do thou enable us to persevere. Avert from us the judgments which we deserve. Protect us from the dangers which threaten us. In the spiritual conflicts to which thou dost call us,

may we be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. May we, by thy grace, be made more than conquerors. Whilst for our personal salvation we pray, we would also present to thee our supplications for our country; that in it the wickedness of the wicked may come to an end, and that, by all classes of the community, the righteousness which exalteth a nation may be cultivated. In all nations may the word of truth be diffused and preached. May thy kingdom come. Vouchsafe to us, this day, thy blessing with all its enjoyments, thy direction in every duty, and thy grace to resist every temptation. May we walk by faith. May we ever live to thy glory. And all that we ask is in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 11.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XIX. 28—48.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The fact mentioned in ver. 28. exemplifies the ardent benevolence and undaunted fortitude of Jesus Christ. He 'went before ascending to Jerusalem,' with the full knowledge of all that he was there to suffer. The incidents recorded in ver. 29—40. furnish proof of his Messiahship and divinity, inasmuch as he manifested supernatural knowledge, and as ancient prophecy received its fulfilment, whilst his reply to the pharisees in vindication of the homage paid to him, and the acclamations addressed to him by the multitude, distinctly intimate, that he was entitled to that homage; that he was in truth, the King whose praises the psalmist had celebrated; that notwithstanding the unbelief and the hostility to himself which were so prevalent, God would most assuredly establish his kingdom, and exalt his name, and that glory to God in the highest, and peace to man, would be the certain and blessed results of his reign. In ver. 41—44. our attention is directed to the deep and overpowering emotions which our Lord felt when he came near to Jerusalem and beheld it, and to the causes by which these intense emotions were produced. He knew the moral and spiritual condition of the Jewish people. He contemplated their impending and their fearful doom. The things belonging to their peace, their salvation, had been proclaimed to them and urged on their attention, but the Messiah, the Saviour, the Son of God, they had despised and rejected. They were about to crucify the Prince of peace, the King of glory. The measure of their iniquity was almost full. Temporal and spiritual judgments awaited them as a nation, whilst to eternal perdition every individual among them who did not believe in him as the Son of God, was exposed. In ver. 45. we are informed of the work of reformation in which Jesus zealously engaged when he entered the temple, and in ver. 46. he declares the ground on which he vindicated him-

self, and reproved and expelled those who desecrated the temple. 'It is written, My house is the house of prayer.' To the prosecution of the great objects of his mission, Jesus continued assiduously to devote himself; he taught daily in the temple. With malignity his enemies contemplated his conduct and heard his instructions, but for a time their wrath was restrained, and for a season all the people were very attentive to hear him.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us admire and imitate the activity, the decision, and the fortitude of our Lord. Let the fulfilment of prophecy, and the proofs of divine knowledge and authority which he exhibited, confirm and invigorate our faith in him as the Son of God. Let us adore and praise him as the Anointed of the Lord, as the Prince of peace, as the Lord of glory. Let us consider the things that belong to our peace, in this the day of our merciful visitation, since those who neglect them shall finally be lost, lost irretrievably and eternally. Let us take warning from the guilt and the doom of the Jews, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of our unbelief. Let the penitent be encouraged by the tears of Jesus over Jerusalem, to look to him and to trust in him. Let us, when we are invited to the house of God, remember that the duties of the sanctuary are sacred and devotional. Thither let us repair, not only to be instructed, but also to pray. Daily let us be attentive to hear the voice of Christ, and let us follow him.

PRAYER.

O Lord, through Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life, we would this evening approach the throne of grace. O may we obtain mercy, and find grace to help us, in the time of need. Look upon us not as we are ourselves, but look upon us in the face of thine Anointed. May it be our privilege to joy in thee, through our Lord Jesus, by whom we have received reconciliation. We bless thee for the revelation of thy nature and thy perfections, in him who is the brightness of thy glory and the express image of thy person. And we pray, we may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent, whom to know is life eternal. In his mission into the world thou hast manifested thy love; for herein indeed is love, not that we loved thee, but that thou loved us, and gavest thy Son to be the propitiation for our sins. We thank thee for the proofs which we possess of the truth of his mission, of his qualifications as Mediator, of his tender compassion, of his matchless love. May the things which belong to our peace with thee, through him, engage our attention; with the blessings which he is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to bestow, may we be enriched. To him we would render the tribute of homage, and gratitude, and obedience. Blessed be the King that came in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven, and glory

in the highest. We desire that the blessings of his gospel may be universally disseminated. May those that are his enemies be subdued. May those who are ignorant of him, be taught to know the truth as it is in him, and to esteem the knowledge of Jesus Christ as the excellency of knowledge. May those who have hitherto rejected him be persuaded to embrace him, and to glorify in his cross. Have pity on the Jews, who, for their sins have been given up to spiritual blindness, and who have been subjected to all those judgments which the Saviour foretold. May the Gentiles submit themselves to him. In the efforts made by thy people for the accomplishment of these ends, may we feel a deep interest and be enabled by thy grace actively to co-operate. In thy service may we ever be, like Jesus our master, devoted and zealous. In the perusal of thy word, and in the exercises of devotion may we ever delight. We commit ourselves and all who are near and dear to us to thy protection during the watches of the night. We pray for the continuance of thy goodness and mercy. We beseech thee to work in us the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, and we in him, according to the grace of our God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. In his name we offer up these our petitions, and for his sake may we find acceptance in thy sight. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVI. 7.

SCRIPTURE—JUDGES V.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The song which this chapter contains affords ample scope for literary disquisition, and we might expatiate on the excellency of the song as a poetic composition; on the truth and sublimity of the conceptions which it embodies; on the propriety and beauty of the figures which embellish it, and on the simplicity and energy of the language in which it is expressed. It is, however, the instruction which conveys that principally demands our attention. In ver. 2, 3. the subject of the song is described. It is the victory which had been recently gained. As praise is ascribed to Jehovah, who had avenged Israel, and by whom the people had been constrained willingly to prosecute the enterprise which Deborah and Barak had undertaken. In ver. 4, 5. there is brief notice of one of the most remarkable facts in the history of God's people, and of his interposition in their behalf. Num. xxi. 24—30. In ver. 6— we are informed of the depressed condition of the Israelites, preceding the period when Deborah judge

them. Commercial intercourse was interrupted. To peril the traveller was exposed. The villages were depopulated. There were intestine divisions. There were the relaxation of military discipline, and the decay of military courage; and there were all the absurdities and impieties of idolatry. In ver. 9—13. the happy change effected under the administration of Deborah is delineated. The supremacy of lawful authority was restored. The pursuits of commerce were resumed. There was security throughout the land. There was the recognition of Jehovah's equity. There was obedience to his institutions. The obligations of Deborah and Barak to the goodness of Jehovah are gratefully acknowledged. In ver. 14—23. the circumstances accompanying the conflict, which terminated in the overthrow of the enemies of Israel, are rehearsed; the achievements of the tribes who had borne a part in the conflict are celebrated; whilst to dishonour and destruction those were doomed who had refused to bear a part in the enterprise to which Jehovah had summoned them. In ver. 24—27. a eulogium is pronounced on the heroine who had completed the victory, by slaying Sisera. In ver. 28—30. the solicitude and impatience of the mother of Sisera—her proud expectations, and her feminine weakness and vanity, are portrayed. In ver. 31. there is expressed an intense desire for the subjugation of the enemies of Jehovah, and for the prosperity and glory of his people.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. The wonders wrought of old by God in behalf of his people, should be remembered and recited to confirm and animate our faith. 2. In seasons of national depression and adversity, we should inquire into the causes on account of which such calamities are sent. 3. In seasons of national peace, and safety, and prosperity, God should be adored as the author of these mercies. 4. In the acknowledgment of God as the God of nations, all ranks and all classes of men should unite. 5. After the honour of being fellow-workers with God, in promoting social happiness and improvement, we should aspire. 6. The refusal to co-operate with God, in promoting the welfare of his people, and in advancing the honour of his name, is criminal, and shall certainly be punished. 7. The hopes of the enemies of God's church and people will be frustrated, and his sovereignty and equity will ever be upheld and maintained. 8. By feeling the power, and living under the influence of the truths and counsels contained in this song, the people of Israel had rest forty years, and by imitating their example, we will do what in us lies to secure our country's weal, and the peace, and prosperity, and extension of the church.

PRAYER.

O Lord, each day we rise we will praise thee. We would remember the wonderful works which thou hast wrought. Great and marvellous are all thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of saints. Thy dealings towards thy church and people have been ever faithful and gracious. Thou didst show thy glory to the tribes of Israel, and didst

publish to them thy statutes. Thou gavest them victory over their enemies. Thou didst put them in possession of the land of promise. Thou didst visit them with judgments when they chose new gods. Thou didst recover them from their backslidings, and didst constrain them willingly to engage in thy service, and didst teach them to rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in Israel. To us also thou hast displayed thy glory; to us thou hast granted the privilege to read in our own tongue the wonderful works of God. Make us wise unto salvation. Our transgressions do thou forgive, for the sake of him who died the just for the unjust. Heal thou our backslidings. Make us thy people, and be thou our God. We are not our own, but thine; may we therefore glorify thee in our bodies and our spirits, which are thine. Teach us to remember our manifold obligations to thee. Our preservation up to the present day, proves to us that thou art long-suffering. Every moment we are indebted to thy bounty. All our religious advantages flow from thee. May we be ever grateful to thee, the God of our salvation. May we be preserved from the evil that is in the world. May we ever cultivate submission to thy will; may we grow in conformity to thine image. May Christ be found in us the hope of glory. May thy Spirit dwell in us, and being led by the Spirit, may we have the evidence in ourselves, and exhibit it to the world, that we are the sons of God. O Lord, may all ranks of men be made thy willing people in the day of thy power. May our princes, and our governors, and those that sit in judgment, praise the Lord. May all the people walk in thy statutes. May we be honoured to be fellow-workers with God, in extending the knowledge and promoting the influence of the gospel. Remove the obstacles that oppose its success. May those who enjoy it consider the curse pronounced in thy word against those who come not to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Let them that love thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. O Lord, deny us not thy grace. Turn not away thy face from us, nor our prayer from thee. Let thy blessing be upon us continually. And all we ask is in the name of Jesus. Amen.

crucified in weakness, was raised in power: for thou didst not leave his soul in hell, neither didst thou suffer thy holy One to see corruption. Triumphant over sin and death, the Redeemer ascended on high, leading captivity captive, receiving gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them. And we rejoice that, though now at the right hand of the heavenly throne, he has not forgotten his faithful people on earth; and in faith we would receive his own blessed assurance, In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. May we, through grace, feel the power of Christ's resurrection upon our own souls. Being risen with him, may we seek the things which are above. Forbid that our affections should be set on the perishing enjoyments of this world, when the best treasure of our hearts is in heaven, and our glorified Redeemer has ascended to prepare a place for us in his own kingdom; a place of rest and peace, where we shall see, and praise, and adore him for ever; a place of joy and everlasting fruition, where we shall love, and possess, and delight in him for ever. O that we had the wings of a dove, that we might escape from all the allurements and temptations of this vain and sinful world, and meditate, with unbroken tranquillity, on all that has been done for our souls' eternal interests. May he, who holds the seven stars in his right hand, be graciously present with all his faithful servants this day, to enable them rightly to divide the word of truth; and let thy light be sent forth along with the truth, to make it effectual for the great purposes of awakening, comforting, and edifying. Let the joy of the Lord be the strength of all his people. Make them all joyful in thy house of prayer. Give a portion in season to those who are laid on beds of languishing and sickness. Arouse and enlighten those who care for none of the things of thy sanctuary. And let the everlasting arms especially be around us, both this day, and all the days of our lives; and at last, may we be admitted into that temple whence there is no going out; for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM L. (*Second Version.*)

SCRIPTURE—PSALM L.

REMARKS.

This psalm is to be viewed, primarily, as a solemn and sublime remonstrance on the part of Jehovah, with his covenanted people Israel, on account of their carnality of mind and wickedness of life, in which judgments, in case of impenitence, are threatened, and encouragements held out to lead them to repentance. The 'Mighty God' is represented as summoning the heavens and the earth to attend, while he pleaded with, and testified against, his people. The judgment is set, and the trial proceeds. The criminals are not charged with neglecting the external legal sacrifices, for in this respect they had been zealous above measure; but with trusting in them for acceptance with God, while they forgot the weightier matters of the law, to 'do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God.' They substituted a multitude of sacrifices, vain oblations, incense, new moons, sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, and appointed feasts, for purity, justice, and charity. Their hands, in the meanwhile, were full of cruelty, oppression and blood. They are reminded, that even the sacrifices which they offered by divine authority, had no intrinsic power to purify the soul, or any inherent value in the sight of God. The animals used in sacrifice were not their own, but God's, whose is the world and the fulness thereof; and who, had he so pleased, might have required 'every beast of the forest, and all the fowls of the mountains' to be devoted upon his altar. God, moreover, is a Spirit; and though man's life, from its infirmity and tendency to decay, requires continual sustenance; he, by whom the whole world is quickened, is infinitely exalted above all such creature-wants, and can regard with approbation, legal sacrifices only, because of the spiritual affections—the faith and love of those who offered them, in obedience to his will. They are further reminded of their gross violations of the divine law, in which course they had been emboldened through the abuse of the divine long-suffering; they are warned, that unless they repented, vengeance would come upon them, when there should be none found able to deliver; and finally, they are taught, that the acceptable worshipper must unite a spirit of humble sincere gratitude to a life of unspotted purity.

The best interpreters are agreed, that this psalm contains a clear prophetic announcement of events in gospel times, as well as a figurative description of the final judgment, when every man shall receive according to his works.

The promulgation of the law from Sinai was as the dawning of that light which shone forth gloriously from Zion, a light to lighten the Gentile world, and the glory of Israel; and the ruin that overtook the carnal unbelieving Jews, for their rejection of Messiah, in the destruction of their temple and nation, is to be viewed as an emblem of that more fearful ruin which will overtake all, who, trusting in their

nominal Christianity and good works, do not come to God through the new and living way, to serve him in spirit and in truth. Professing Christians, whose conduct is inconsistent with their principles, have great need to remember, that, whatever may be the place and the honour they enjoy in the church now, there is a day coming when the mask shall be taken off, and their hypocrisy and wickedness shall be exposed before the universe. Let us 'not be deceived, for God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap. Let us not be weary in well-doing; for, in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.'

PRAYER.

Almighty, and all-blessed God! enable us to come before thee, on this the evening of thy holy day, with that reverential awe which becomes the creature addressing his Creator. May we be impressed by the thought that we have forfeited every claim upon thy bounty, and that by nature we are the children of wrath even as others. May we remember, in all our approaches to thy throne, that it is only through the sacrifice and merits of thine only and well-beloved Son, that we can offer up our supplications to a Being who to the wicked is a consuming fire; and that, as there is only one God, the hearer of prayer, so there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. We bless thee that a way of access has been opened by the blood of the cross, by which guilty and ruined sinners can come, and ask mercy to pardon, and grace to help in the time of need; and that, though far from thee by nature, we are brought nigh, and reconciled, and adopted into thy family. Enable us, at this time, to look in faith to him whom our sins pierced, and mourn, as one mourneth for an only son, and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. And do thou bring us to the fount of cleansing, that we may be sprinkled from all our filthiness, and all our idols. Wash us, and we shall be whiter than the snow. Create in us a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within us. May we win Christ, and be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith, that we may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. May we be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, putting on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the wicked one, and to cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. May

we know the blessedness of that man whose transgression is forgiven, and unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. And may the love of Christ constrain us thus to judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again. May we be enabled to evidence the reality of our faith, by the purity of our practice. May we daily put off the old man, with all his deeds. Whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue and any praise, on these things may we meditate, and these things may we do. And this one thing may we do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, may we press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We adore and bless thy name, heavenly Father, for the renewed opportunities granted us this day of waiting upon thee in the sanctuary. Seal good impressions on our hearts, confirm pious resolutions, and give unto us all more of thy Holy Spirit. Pardon our many sins and short-comings in all our duties. Greatly bless and prosper all the means employed for extending the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom. Let thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. We would commit ourselves, our relations and friends, to thy watchful care during the silent night. In life, and in death, and throughout eternity, may we ever be with thee. Lord, hear, forgive, and do to us and for us, more than we can ask, or even think, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 165.

SCRIPTURE—JOSHUA XXIV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Of the truths implied or expressed in this chapter, the following may be specially noticed. Ver. 2—13. The mercies received from God, ought to be remembered and reviewed. As here, there are mentioned the call of Abraham, the legation of Moses, the emancipation of the Hebrews, their guidance through the wilderness, triumph over their foes, and final establishment in Canaan: so our souls should bless the Lord, and not forget any of his benefits. These mercies constitute a ground of appeal and an argument for obedience. Ver. 14. It were base ingratitude to withhold our service from him, who has done so much for us. Ver. 15. There ought to be no halting in our decision respecting religion. As

there is no reasonable ground of hesitation between the competing claims of the masters who demand our obedience, so it is 'to-day' only that we are sure of an opportunity of making a choice. Ver. 14, 15. God will accept only a sincere, willing, undivided homage, one springing from a filial fear, rendered with an upright heart, and consecrated to him alone. We ought individually to form and avow the resolution of adhering in all circumstances to the service of God, and recommending it to others. Ver. 15. It were dastardly to conceal our principles; and the apostacy or hostility of others should excite us to greater boldness and decision. There is an intimate connection between personal and family religion. Ver. 15. When parents are pious, it will be their aim to teach also their 'house to serve the Lord.' There is an inveterate aversion in the human heart to the service of God. Ver. 19. It lies under a moral inability, in consequence of its corruption; which, so far from being an apology for disobedience, is itself exceeding sinful. Ver. 20—22. Those who bely their profession, and apostatise from God's service, are peculiarly criminal and condemnable. Ver. 26, 27. We ought faithfully to keep in remembrance the vows we have taken: and to beware of allowing our impressions to evaporate, and our resolutions to fail.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

On ourselves, let us now bring these truths to bear. Many and precious are the benefits which the Almighty has lavished on our ancestors, and on ourselves. Early in our land was the darkness of heathenism dispelled by the light of Christianity. Rapidly was the dominion of popery overthrown. Long have liberty, and peace, and plenty, had their abode among us. And, individually, what experience have we had of the kindness of our heavenly Father, in the bounties of his providence, and the riches of his grace! Well indeed may all that is within us be stirred up to bless his holy name. Surely the mercies of God ought to persuade us to present ourselves living sacrifices unto him, and the love of Christ to constrain us to live, not unto ourselves but unto him. And why should we halt between two opinions? We cannot say that it is evil to serve the Lord. Our consciences bear testimony that the reverse is true. And as there is no reason for hesitation, so there is no room for delay. But let us remember that our service, in order to its being acceptable, must be voluntary, sincere, and cordial. Nor should we be satisfied with aiming ourselves at the rendering of such a service. We should recommend it to others, and especially encourage one another in it, that so this house may enjoy the peculiar blessing of the God of Israel's families. And if our inability be manifested by every effort, let us thereby be urged to implore the promised influence of the Spirit.

PRAYER.

In coming into thy presence, O Lord, this morning, we would express our gratitude to thee for thine innumerable mercies. Though thou art a holy and jealous God, and we have

done much to provoke thee to anger, yet thou hast loaded us daily with thy benefits. We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what works thou didst in their days, in the times of old. So graciously hast thou defended, so abundantly prospered, and so richly privileged our land, that we may well say, thou hast not dealt so with any other people. And when we look back on all the way thou hast led us through the wilderness, we see reason at every step of our pilgrimage to set up our Ebenezer, and acknowledge, 'hitherto hath the Lord helped us.' Thanks be to thee for all thy gifts, but especially for thine unspeakable gift. Ever would we magnify thy name, because thou didst not spare thine own Son, but didst deliver him up, and didst, by his obedience unto death, make full provision for our salvation. Yet how ungratefully have we requited thee. We have not rendered again unto thee according to the benefits done unto us. We have been forgetful of thy loving kindness, and shamefully insensible to its claims. Yea, we have rebelled against thee, and have preferred the service of sin and satan to thy holy and blessed service. But still O Lord, would we hope in thy mercy. Do thou graciously forgive our transgressions; and enable us to yield ourselves unreservedly to thee, as thy willing and faithful servants. Too long have we served other masters, but we would henceforth be for the Lord alone. Do thou by thy grace, for of ourselves we can do nothing incline us to choose thee with our whole heart as our God, and to consecrate all the talents thou hast given us to thy service and glory. Sprinkle clean water upon us, and we shall be clean from all our filthiness, and from all our idols do thou cleanse us; a new heart also do thou give us, and thy Spirit do thou put within us, that we may walk in thy statutes and keep thy judgments and do them. O forbid that we should ever attempt to serve God and mammon. May we have courage to avow ourselves thy servants whatever temptations we encounter, and whatever defections we witness. And in the exercise of Christian love, let us strive to advance the salvation of our brethren, and such especially are near and dear to us. Grant, O God, a revival of family religion throughout the land. Let an altar be erected to thee in every dwelling: and let the young be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Follow with thy blessing the holy services of yesterday. Let the impressions then made, be preserved and deepened; the resolutions then formed, be remembered and executed. May we spend the

new day under a livelier sense of our obligations to thee. And O grant, that when we come to die, we may be found to have finished the work given us to do, and may obtain an abundant entrance into heaven. And all that we ask, is for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCL. 1.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XVIII. 28—43.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In the first division of this portion of scripture, ver. 28—30. we are taught that men are prone to boast of their services, however trifling and imperfect. Some degree of self-complacency seems to have sprung up in the apostle's breast, as he contrasted his surrender of all he had for Christ, with the departure from him of the amiable ruler, who was required to part with his possessions: and thus is pride frequently cherished by an unwise comparison of ourselves with one another. We are taught also, that every service done to Christ, whatever sacrifice it may cost, shall be abundantly recompensed. A decided adherence to him may subject to severe trials, but an ample compensation is provided in the peace and hope which he imparts even on earth, and especially in the felicity he will bestow in heaven. In the second division, ver. 31—34. we have an illustration and evidence of the prescience, and fortitude, and generosity of Christ. His prescience appears in his clear prediction of the contumelious and cruel treatment he should experience, together with his resurrection: his fortitude, in his advancing steadfastly to that city which he knew would be the scene of his sufferings, and his announcing their approach without any indication of fear: his generosity also, in his willingly submitting to such abasement and agony, for the purpose of achieving man's redemption. The following truths, besides, are involved in the third division, ver. 35—43. Ver. 37. No tidings are comparable to the news of the Redeemer's coming. Ver. 38. Divine mercy is the source of every blessing. Ver. 39. Importunity and perseverance should characterize our prayers for deliverance. Ver. 39. Opposition is to be expected in making application to the Saviour. Ver. 40—42. Sooner or later the Lord will graciously listen to the cry for mercy. Ver. 42. Faith is the great instrument by which benefits are received from the hand of the Redeemer. Ver. 43. Obedience and praise ought to be the result of every interposition of providence or grace, in behalf of ourselves or others.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

What matter of thankfulness is there, in our being exempted from the fiery trials to which the apostles, and many of our ancestors, were exposed! The following of Christ, however, still demands the bearing of the cross. Yet well may every friend and subject be parted with, that comes into competition

with our love and duty to him: for what are they all, in comparison of the present blessedness and the future glory which he guarantees to his faithful disciples? How strong also are the claims which he has on our devoted homage! For our salvation, he submitted to all those bitter sufferings which issued in his death. And as the full prospect of these did not prevent him in heaven from undertaking our cause, nor on earth from prosecuting it, so he generously bore them all, that he might redeem us from ruin. Worthy therefore is he of all the love wherewith our hearts can glow, and all the service which our lives can render. But this we cannot yield of ourselves. We labour naturally under a blindness and poverty, far more distressing than the loss of eye-sight and the want of means. But Jesus is even now passing by, and will not disdain the cry for mercy. Let us, therefore, breaking through every entanglement, spread out our wants before him. And having received an answer to our petition, let us unite in magnifying his name, and following his footsteps, till we come to see his glory in the light of heaven.

PRAYER.

O Lord, our God, we would bow before thee this evening, with reverence and gratitude, for thou art infinitely worthy to be feared and praised. Thou hast made us capable of beholding thy glory in thy works; and whithersoever we turn our eyes, we see the manifestations of thy wisdom, and power, and goodness. In ourselves also, whom thou hast fearfully and wonderfully made, in the preservation of our bodily and mental powers, and in the countless comforts of our lot, we discern the striking tokens of thy benevolence. But especially, O Lord, do we behold the display of all thine attributes, and chiefly of thine infinite love, in the work of our redemption. When we call to mind, that thou didst send thine own Son into the world to be our substitute and surety, that by thy determinate counsel, though by wicked hands, he was subjected to every variety of suffering and sorrow, and that at length he was made a sacrifice for sin; our souls would magnify thee, and would celebrate the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain. And we would rejoice in the assurance, that he who was crucified is now enthroned, and that he who died to make atonement, ever liveth to make intercession. But alas! we are naturally insensible to this revelation of thy character. We are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our hearts. And even after becoming disciples, our obedience is so partial and polluted, that we must confess ourselves unprofitable servants. Therefore would we implore thee to have mercy upon us. As thou didst at first command the light to shine out of darkness, do

thou now shine in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. Open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of thy law: and in the marvellous light of the gospel, let us see the loveliness, and feel the preciousness, and experience the attraction of the Saviour. Make us willing to forfeit every friendship, and sacrifice every interest, rather than part from him. While we praise him for the benefits we receive, may we go after him in the course of holiness: and may his exceeding great and precious promises excite us to follow him through bad as well as good report. And grant, O God, that we may now experience the everlasting consolation and good hope through grace of thy people, and may be made meet in due time for the glory of heaven. Have compassion on those in other lands who are yet sitting in darkness, and those in our own, whom the God of this world hath blinded, so that they believe not. Have compassion also on the poor and afflicted: and make us willing, according to our ability, to relieve and comfort them. Watch over us during the night: and if raised up by thy providence on a new day, may it be spent in thy fear. O hear us for the sake of Jesus, to whom we would ascribe everlasting praise. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 57.

SCRIPTURE—JUDGES II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. A fearful time of reckoning for sin shall assuredly arrive. As the angel of the Lord, who was the Son of God, said to the Israelites, 'ye have not obeyed my voice, why have ye done this?' so will he at length, as judge, call all transgressors to account for their disobedience. Ver. 3. Iniquity uniformly entails punishment. By allowing the Canaanites to remain, the Israelites were tempted to sin, and subjected to suffering; and thus is disobedience always productive of misery here, while it exposes to the wrath of God for ever. Ver. 4. It is the design of the rebuke and chastisement which God administers, to bring to repentance. Ver. 5. There may be much profession of penitence, while the heart is still unchanged. The place where the people were rebuked was called 'Bochim,' or 'the weepers,' on account of the many tears they shed; yet their after conduct showed that there was but little of true repentance among them. Ver. 10—13. The most highly favoured are prone to forget the mercies of God and to fall into sin, so that nothing but divine grace can preserve those even who live in the midst of privilege. Ver. 14, 15. The apos-

tacy of privileged professors is peculiarly offensive to God, and exposes to the inflictions of his hottest anger. Ver. 16, 18. God is rich in goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; being unwilling to afflict, and ready to pardon and relieve. Again and again, as the Hebrew constitution made no provision for a permanent governor, did he raise up persons, called judges, who, in consequence of achieving some emancipation, were invested with the government, and became the destroyers of idolatry and promoters of religion, as well as deliverers of the state. Ver. 17, 19. Mankind are ever prone to abuse the divine patience—to forget the design, and efface the impressions of affliction, as soon as it is removed. Ver. 20—23. The incurring of God's anger involves the forfeiture of every privilege, and subjection to the power of our enemies.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

There is abundant reason for deep humiliation in the retrospect of our conduct. We have been the recipients of many mercies, but have not rendered again unto the Lord according to the benefits done unto us. Our consciences, responding to the charges of God's word, accuse us of innumerable and aggravated sins, while they forbid us to attempt our own vindication. So that well may we shed the tears of godly sorrow. And it is to reduce us to penitence, that we are rebuked and chastened of the Lord. He reproves us in his word, and afflicts us in his providence, to bring us back to him with the relents of the returning prodigal. Such repentance, however, only is genuine as is followed by a real and thorough reformation. We must justify our profession by bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. And let us remember that if it be otherwise, we expose ourselves pre-eminently to the wrath of God. He indeed may bear long with us, and still in compassion load us with his benefits; his goodness being designed, as well as his severity, to lead us to repentance. But if we refuse to 'cease from our own doings, and from our stubborn way,' what is to be expected but abandonment to all that is evil? Let us therefore seek the Lord with supplication and weeping; and, in dependence on his grace, join ourselves to him in a perpetual covenant, not to be forgotten.

PRAYER.

O thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, and who art most high over all the earth, we would rejoice in our privilege of worshipping thee. The gods which the heathens worship are dumb idols; they cannot hear or help their votaries. But thou art the living and the true God. Thou hast created the heavens and the earth. Thy kingdom ruleth over all, and what thou pleassest that thou doest in heaven, and on earth, and in all deep places. To thee also belong all perfection and excellence; and from thee are derived all goodness and blessedness. Unto thy name, therefore, alone would we render the humble tribute of our prayer and praise. And yet, O Lord, well may we be ashamed and blush to lift

up our faces before thee. Thou hast nourished us and brought us up as children, but we have rebelled against thee. We have experienced the riches of thy goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, but we have thence taken occasion to sin against thee more heinously. We have forsaken thee, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out unto ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. We are by nature sold under sin, yea, we have sold ourselves into the hands of our enemies; and the more we are tried by temptation, the more deceitful and wicked are our hearts proved to be. Surely it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not. O teach us, gracious God, to humble ourselves before thee, and to sorrow for our sins after a godly sort. Give us that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, that needeth not to be repented of. May we know the evil and bitterness of sin; and under an apprehension of thy mercy in Christ Jesus, return to thee with our whole heart. And forbid, Lord, that our goodness should be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew, which soon goeth away. May we bring forth fruit meet for repentance, and daily grow in grace, and have our path as that of the just, be like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Sensible of our own guilt and weakness, we would bless thee for that fulness of merit and grace which it hath pleased thee should dwell in Christ, and would entreat thee, for his sake, to forgive our manifold iniquities, and to enable us in time to come to do thy holy will. Surrounded as we are by spiritual enemies on every side, we beseech thee for thine effectual aid. May we ever fight the good fight of faith; may we overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and be more than conquerors through him that loved us. Have mercy, O Father, upon our brethren. Hear the groanings of the afflicted. Supply the wants of the needy. Redress the wrongs of the injured. And reveal thyself graciously to every mourning spirit. Grateful for thy watchfulness over us by night, we cast ourselves anew on thy care. Keep us in thy fear all the day long. And O be thou our present and everlasting portion, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM xcvi. 1.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE xix. 1—27.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 2. The most unlikely persons are sometimes selected as monuments of the riches of divine mercy, and the power of divine grace. The office, and the wealth, and the character of Zaccheus, formed a three-fold barrier in the way of his conversion, yet was he effectually called. Ver. 3, 4. The mere indulgence of an idle curiosity has often been overruled for bringing sinners to the knowledge and belief of the truth. As the publican, having sought to see Jesus, under the influence of such a principle, was called: so many have been savingly arrested, while looking into the Bible, or attending the church from vain and even vicious motives. Ver. 5. The Lord knoweth them that are his. Zaccheus was noticed in the sycamore-tree, as Nathaniel was under the fig-tree. Ver. 7. The operations of divine grace are offensive to the self-conceited and self-righteous. Ver. 8. True repentance involves a change of character, and issues in a change of conduct. The penitent cannot fail to make restitution of what they have unjustly acquired, and to be addicted to charity towards the poor. Ver. 10. The grand design of Christ's advent is to save the lost: and that is, by nature, the character of all. Ver. 12, 13. In the parable, certain talents are committed to all, to be used in the service of Christ. Ver. 14. Men are naturally averse to his authority. They say by their deeds, if not with their tongues, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' Ver. 15. A time of reckoning shall at length arrive. Jesus has gone to heaven, but he shall return as judge. Ver. 16—19. The services of Christians ought to be proportional to their advantages: and their rewards shall be proportionable to their services. Ver. 20—23. Mere slothfulness is as ruinous as positive rebellion. The idle servant was condemned as well as the avowed enemy. Ver. 24—26. All the excuses of sinners will at length appear futile. Their very pleas will be turned into matter of condemnation. Ver. 27. The destruction of the wicked is certain, and shall be tremendous.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How blessed is that announcement from the lips of our Lord himself: 'the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.' Surely when our condition is so wretched and hopeless, as to be emphatically characterized by the term 'lost,' there ought to be no delay in our application to him. Difficulties indeed, and entanglements, there are in the way. But there is abundant encouragement also. Lost though we are, Jesus is seeking, as he is sufficient, to save us: and sinners though we are, he is willing to be our guest, and bless us with his fellowship. Let us therefore go where he may be seen, and 'receive him joyfully.' But be it remembered, that in accepting his salvation, all sin must be renounced, and a course of self-denial and sanctity begun. Talents have been committed to us by him,

with the solemn charge, 'occupy till I come,' and it is not permitted us, either in avowed enmity to rebel against his government, or in hollow profession to be slothful and profitless; for in either case, we should entail his rebuke and wrath. Our talents ought to be laid out in diligent obedience to his authority, and habitual expectation of his speedy return. And if it be so, then, at his second advent, though our ability be from his grace, and our acceptance through his merit, we shall obtain a great reward. But alas! for the fate of others: for their excuses shall be vain, and their punishment dreadful, in 'that day.'

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, let us have access to thee at this time, through Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, and give us the sweet and satisfying privilege of fellowship while we call on thy name. We would now present ourselves living sacrifices unto thee, which is our reasonable service. From thee are all our talents derived. Thou hast bestowed on us many powers and privileges, many means and opportunities of usefulness. And blessed be thy name, that, as thou hast commanded us to lay them out in thy service, thou art a gracious Master, and requirest of us nothing which thou art not willing to enable us to perform. And yet alas! we have multiplied our iniquities against thee. We are sinners by nature and by practice. With our lives, if not with our lips, we have often said, 'we are our own, who is Lord over us?' and yielding to the temptations of the world, we have, instead of consecrating all thy gifts to thy glory, either openly rebelled, or secretly disobeyed. And in consequence, O Lord, we desire to feel that we are lost, deserving of thy wrath, and unable to redeem our souls from destruction. But we rejoice to know, that thy Son came to seek and to save such as we are: and that, having shed his precious blood, to open for us the way of salvation, his language still is, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him, and sup with him, and he with me.' O help us then, we pray thee, to welcome Jesus into our hearts, in faith and love. May we receive him joyfully, and make him all our desire, that he may be all our salvation. May our dependence be alone on his finished righteousness. And grant, O God, that while we glory in his cross, we may bow to his sceptre. May we be willing to have him to reign over us. Whether it be little or much that we are intrusted with, may we have grace to be faithful: and instead of being wicked and slothful servants, let us occupy affectionately and diligently all the talents thou hast committed to us. We would keep in mind the se-

cond and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. To the time of his return may we daily look forward, and be giving diligence, that we may be found of the Lord in peace when he cometh. O do thou cause salvation to come to this house. May we all be interested in the everlasting covenant: and being united in the bonds of Christian love, be prepared for dwelling with our Saviour in heaven. And grant that thy kingdom may immediately appear, and speedily come over all the earth. Be our guardian by night as thou hast been by day. May our sleep be refreshing; and being raised up by thy good providence on a new morning, may our lives be devoted to thy service. Hear us in heaven, and exceed all our requests, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM L. 4. (*Second Version.*)

SCRIPTURE—JUDGES IV.

REMARKS.

During the life of Ehud, the Israelites had been, by his authority and example, in a great measure reclaimed and preserved from those sins to which they were so prone. His death was followed by their return to the open commission of evil. And national degeneracy was the precursor and the cause of national judgments. The judgments of God awakened the Israelites to a sense of their sinfulness, and excited them to pray to him in whose sight they had done evil, and who alone was able to deliver them from that state of oppression to which they had been subjected. Their cry was heard, and the Lord in his mercy raised up Deborah the prophetess, to be their instructor and judge. To her, the Lord made known his purpose to interpose for their deliverance. In effecting their deliverance, Barak was invested with the command of ten thousand men. In the district to which he was directed to lead the army Heber the Kenite resided. And the statement that he 'had severed himself from the Kenites,' is a proof that the exhortation of Moses (Num. x. 29—32.) to Hobab, from whom Heber was a descendant, had been complied with, whilst the fact that the descendants of Hobab had increased in number, wealth and influence to such a degree, that their alliance was courted by the king of Canaan, demonstrates that the promise by which the exhortation was enforced had been literally fulfilled. The movements and position of Barak and his army, having been announced to the captain of the host of the king of Canaan, the forces of the kingdom were marshalled. In the conflict that ensued, there was put forth, on behalf of the Israelites, a power which worldly men do not recognise in human affairs. 'The Lord defeated Sisera and all his chariots, and all his horses. Sisera sought personal safety in flight. He was slain.'

by Jael the wife of Heber, who proffered him a refuge and treated him with hospitality, but afterwards slew him. Her conduct in putting him to death, is not to be ascribed to revenge, neither was it dictated exclusively, or chiefly, by patriotism. It was an act in accordance with the will of God; it was performed under the influence of a divine impulse, and it is expressly commended in scripture. Chap. vi. 24—27. In the death of Sisera by the hand of Jael, the announcement delivered at the commencement of the enterprise, which Barak was summoned to undertake, received its accomplishment.

The following truths are illustrated in this portion of sacred history, and are among the lessons which we ought to derive from it. 1. The death of men of eminent station, who adorned that station by their personal excellencies, and who repressed immorality by their authority and example, is a severe and public calamity. 2. When wickedness becomes general in a community, and immoralities are so prevalent as to constitute the national character, the Lord is provoked to send national judgments. 3. The infliction of wide-spread calamities, the depression of a state by its enemies and the ravages of war, are indications of God's displeasure. 4. Amidst all the judgments which God inflicts, he ever watches over his church, and seasonably interposes to call his people to repentance, by raising up his servants to instruct them. 5. In national conflicts, Jehovah, as the moral governor of nations, determines the issue. 6. God punishes the wicked who harden themselves against him, and who oppress his people. 7. The weakest instruments are made effective, when God employs them for executing his purposes.

PRAYER.

O Lord God of Israel, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Thy works are perfect, and thy ways are judgment. Thou art a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right art thou. But we, thy subjects, have rebelled against thee. In thy sight we have done evil. We have provoked thee, the holy One to anger. May the revelation of thy wrath against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, duly affect our consciences. May we, from thy judgments inflicted on thy people of old, and from the punishment of their oppressors, and from thy judgments with which at any time we or others are visited, learn righteousness. May the instructions addressed to us in thy word, be by us received and improved. Be merciful to our unrighteousness; our sins and iniquities do thou remember no more. Through the righteousness of the Redeemer may we be freely justified; by thy Spirit may we be sanctified. On the path of duty which thou hast prescribed, however difficult and arduous it may be, may we enter, and in it do thou enable us to persevere. Avert from us the judgments which we deserve. Protect us from the dangers which threaten us. In the spiritual conflicts to which thou dost call us,

may we be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. May we, by thy grace, be made more than conquerors. Whilst for our personal salvation we pray, we would also present to thee our supplications for our country; that in it the wickedness of the wicked may come to an end, and that, by all classes of the community, the righteousness which exalteth a nation may be cultivated. In all nations may the word of truth be diffused and preached. May thy kingdom come. Vouchsafe to us, this day, thy blessing with all its enjoyments, thy direction in every duty, and thy grace to resist every temptation. May we walk by faith. May we ever live to thy glory. And all that we ask is in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 11.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XIX. 28—48.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The fact mentioned in ver. 28. exemplifies the ardent benevolence and undaunted fortitude of Jesus Christ. He 'went before ascending to Jerusalem,' with the full knowledge of all that he was there to suffer. The incidents recorded in ver. 29—40. furnish proof of his Messiahship and divinity, inasmuch as he manifested supernatural knowledge, and as ancient prophecy received its fulfilment, whilst his reply to the pharisees in vindication of the homage paid to him, and the acclamations addressed to him by the multitude, distinctly intimate, that he was entitled to that homage; that he was in truth, the King whose praises the psalmist had celebrated; that notwithstanding the unbelief and the hostility to himself which were so prevalent, God would most assuredly establish his kingdom, and exalt his name, and that glory to God in the highest, and peace to man, would be the certain and blessed results of his reign. In ver. 41—44. our attention is directed to the deep and overpowering emotions which our Lord felt when he came near to Jerusalem and beheld it, and to the causes by which these intense emotions were produced. He knew the moral and spiritual condition of the Jewish people. He contemplated their impending and their fearful doom. The things belonging to their peace, their salvation, had been proclaimed to them and urged on their attention, but the Messiah, the Saviour, the Son of God, they had despised and rejected. They were about to crucify the Prince of peace, the King of glory. The measure of their iniquity was almost full. Temporal and spiritual judgments awaited them as a nation, whilst to eternal perdition every individual among them who did not believe in him as the Son of God, was exposed. In ver. 45. we are informed of the work of reformation in which Jesus zealously engaged when he entered the temple, and in ver. 46. he declares the ground on which he vindicated him-

self, and reproved and expelled those who desecrated the temple. 'It is written, My house is the house of prayer.' To the prosecution of the great objects of his mission, Jesus continued assiduously to devote himself; he taught daily in the temple. With malignity his enemies contemplated his conduct and heard his instructions, but for a time their wrath was restrained, and for a season all the people were very attentive to hear him.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us admire and imitate the activity, the decision, and the fortitude of our Lord. Let the fulfilment of prophecy, and the proofs of divine knowledge and authority which he exhibited, confirm and invigorate our faith in him as the Son of God. Let us adore and praise him as the Anointed of the Lord, as the Prince of peace, as the Lord of glory. Let us consider the things that belong to our peace, in this the day of our merciful visitation, since those who neglect them shall finally be lost, lost irretrievably and eternally. Let us take warning from the guilt and the doom of the Jews, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of our unbelief. Let the penitent be encouraged by the tears of Jesus over Jerusalem, to look to him and to trust in him. Let us, when we are invited to the house of God, remember that the duties of the sanctuary are sacred and devotional. Thither let us repair, not only to be instructed, but also to pray. Daily let us be attentive to hear the voice of Christ, and let us follow him.

PRAYER.

O Lord, through Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life, we would this evening approach the throne of grace. O may we obtain mercy, and find grace to help us, in the time of need. Look upon us not as we are ourselves, but look upon us in the face of thine Anointed. May it be our privilege to joy in thee, through our Lord Jesus, by whom we have received reconciliation. We bless thee for the revelation of thy nature and thy perfections, in him who is the brightness of thy glory and the express image of thy person. And we pray, we may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent, whom to know is life eternal. In his mission into the world thou hast manifested thy love; for herein indeed is love, not that we loved thee, but that thou loved us, and gavest thy Son to be the propitiation for our sins. We thank thee for the proofs which we possess of the truth of his mission, of his qualifications as Mediator, of his tender compassion, of his matchless love. May the things which belong to our peace with thee, through him, engage our attention; with the blessings which he is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to bestow, may we be enriched. To him we would render the tribute of homage, and gratitude, and obedience. Blessed be the King that came in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven, and glory

in the highest. We desire that the blessings of his gospel may be universally disseminated. O may those that are his enemies be subdued. May those who are ignorant of him, be taught to know the truth as it is in him, and to esteem the knowledge of Jesus Christ as the excellency of knowledge. May those who have hitherto rejected him be persuaded to embrace him, and to glory in his cross. Have pity on the Jews, who, for their sins have been given up to spiritual blindness, and who have been subjected to all those judgments which the Saviour foretold. May the Gentiles submit themselves to him. In the efforts made by thy people for the accomplishment of these ends, may we feel a deep interest, and be enabled by thy grace actively to co-operate. In thy service may we ever be, like Jesus our master, devoted and zealous. In the perusal of thy word, and in the exercises of devotion may we ever delight. We commit ourselves and all who are near and dear to us to thy protection during the watches of the night. We pray for the continuance of thy goodness and mercy. We beseech thee to work in us all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, and we in him, according to the grace of our God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. In his name we offer up these our petitions, and for his sake may we find acceptance in thy sight. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVI. 7.

SCRIPTURE—JUDGES V.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The song which this chapter contains affords ample scope for literary disquisition, and we might expatiate on the excellency of the song as a poetical composition; on the truth and sublimity of the conceptions which it embodies; on the propriety and beauty of the figures which embellish it, and on the simplicity and energy of the language in which it is expressed. It is, however, the instruction which it conveys that principally demands our attention. In ver. 2, 3. the subject of the song is described. It is the victory which had been recently gained. And praise is ascribed to Jehovah, who had avenged Israel, and by whom the people had been constrained willingly to prosecute the enterprise which Deborah and Barak had undertaken. In ver. 4, 5. there is a brief notice of one of the most remarkable facts in the history of God's people, and of his interposition in their behalf. Num. xxi. 24—30. In ver. 6—8. we are informed of the depressed condition of the Israelites, preceding the period when Deborah judged

them. Commercial intercourse was interrupted. To peril the traveller was exposed. The villages were depopulated. There were intestine divisions. There were the relaxation of military discipline, and the decay of military courage; and there were all the absurdities and impieties of idolatry. In ver. 9—13. the happy change effected under the administration of Deborah is delineated. The supremacy of lawful authority was restored. The pursuits of commerce were resumed. There was security throughout the land. There was the recognition of Jehovah's equity. There was obedience to his institutions. The obligations of Deborah and Barak to the goodness of Jehovah are gratefully acknowledged. In ver. 14—23. the circumstances accompanying the conflict, which terminated in the overthrow of the enemies of Israel, are rehearsed; the achievements of the tribes who had borne a part in the conflict are celebrated; whilst to dishonour and destruction those were doomed who had refused to bear a part in the enterprise to which Jehovah had summoned them. In ver. 24—27. a eulogium is pronounced on the heroine who had completed the victory, by slaying Sisera. In ver. 28—30. the solicitude and impatience of the mother of Sisera—her proud expectations, and her feminine weakness and vanity, are portrayed. In ver. 31. there is expressed an intense desire for the subjugation of the enemies of Jehovah, and for the prosperity and glory of his people.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. The wonders wrought of old by God in behalf of his people, should be remembered and recited to confirm and animate our faith. 2. In seasons of national depression and adversity, we should inquire into the causes on account of which such calamities are sent. 3. In seasons of national peace, and safety, and prosperity, God should be adored as the author of these mercies. 4. In the acknowledgment of God as the God of nations, all ranks and all classes of men should unite. 5. After the honour of being fellow-workers with God, in promoting social happiness and improvement, we should aspire. 6. The refusal to co-operate with God, in promoting the welfare of his people, and in advancing the honour of his name, is criminal, and shall certainly be punished. 7. The hopes of the enemies of God's church and people will be frustrated, and his sovereignty and equity will ever be upheld and maintained. 8. By feeling the power, and living under the influence of the truths and counsels contained in this song, the people of Israel had rest forty years, and by imitating their example, we will do what in us lies to secure our country's weal, and the peace, and prosperity, and extension of the church.

PRAYER.

O Lord, each day we rise we will praise thee. We would remember the wonderful works which thou hast wrought. Great and marvellous are all thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of saints. Thy dealings towards thy church and people have been ever faithful and gracious. Thou didst show thy glory to the tribes of Israel, and didst

publish to them thy statutes. Thou gavest them victory over their enemies. Thou didst put them in possession of the land of promise. Thou didst visit them with judgments when they chose new gods. Thou didst recover them from their backslidings, and didst constrain them willingly to engage in thy service, and didst teach them to rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in Israel. To us also thou hast displayed thy glory; to us thou hast granted the privilege to read in our own tongue the wonderful works of God. Make us wise unto salvation. Our transgressions do thou forgive, for the sake of him who died the just for the unjust. Heal thou our backslidings. Make us thy people, and be thou our God. We are not our own, but thine; may we therefore glorify thee in our bodies and our spirits, which are thine. Teach us to remember our manifold obligations to thee. Our preservation up to the present day, proves to us that thou art long-suffering. Every moment we are indebted to thy bounty. All our religious advantages flow from thee. May we be ever grateful to thee, the God of our salvation. May we be preserved from the evil that is in the world. May we ever cultivate submission to thy will; may we grow in conformity to thine image. May Christ be found in us the hope of glory. May thy Spirit dwell in us, and being led by the Spirit, may we have the evidence in ourselves, and exhibit it to the world, that we are the sons of God. O Lord, may all ranks of men be made thy willing people in the day of thy power. May our princes, and our governors, and those that sit in judgment, praise the Lord. May all the people walk in thy statutes. May we be honoured to be fellow-workers with God, in extending the knowledge and promoting the influence of the gospel. Remove the obstacles that oppose its success. May those who enjoy it consider the curse pronounced in thy word against those who come not to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Let them that love thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. O Lord, deny us not thy grace. Turn not away thy face from us, nor our prayer from thee. Let thy blessing be upon us continually. And all we ask is in the name of Jesus. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XL. 3.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XX. 1—26.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1. In this passage we are informed of the duty to which our Saviour devoted himself after his arrival at Jerusalem. Whilst engaged in this duty, a question was proposed to him by his enemies, in the answer to which they hoped they would either be furnished with a pretext for accusing him of illegal interference with the peculiar duties of the constituted authorities, or that he would make an avowal of claims which they were prepared to maintain involved blasphemy. They had been mortified by the homage which He had received from the multitude; they had been irritated as well as silenced by the reproach which he had delivered; they had witnessed, with bitter hostility, his conduct towards those that bought and sold in the temple, though they dared not to interrupt him, and therefore did they address to him the question in ver. 2. A direct answer to the inquiry Jesus did not return; and for this obvious reason, that he might frustrate their wicked design in proposing it, but he does in effect answer it; for the reply which should state truly the authority of John's baptism, would declare, at the same time, the authority by which our Lord acted. They, actuated by carnal and worldly motives, professed themselves unable to tell whence was the baptism of John, and Jesus therefore refused to gratify them by answering their unreasonable and insidious question. Evidence the most ample and conclusive to vindicate and establish his authority, he had already exhibited, and that evidence it became them to appreciate.

This incident exemplifies the pernicious influence of prejudice. Against it we should be on our guard. It proves to us that it is unreasonable to demand, in support of revelation, new and additional evidence, when that which is afforded is so abundant, courts our examination, and will ever produce a full conviction of the divine authority of Jesus on the mind of every man who examines it with attention, with candour, with a desire to know the truth, and with prayer to the God of truth. The parable contained in ver. 9—18. was suggested by the circumstances which had just occurred, and by a succession of incidents in which its representations were soon realized. The parable presents to our consideration the former and the then passing dealings of God with the Jewish nation. It predicts the consummation of the guilt of the Jews. It announces the punishment which should be inflicted on them. It declares that their privileges should be transferred to the Gentiles. And the parable is followed up by an intimation that in the events in which it was to be realized, ancient prophecy was also to receive its accomplishment.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The parable teaches us, 1. That our improvement, as individuals and as a church, should correspond with our privileges. 2. That our eternal salvation

is connected with the sentiments we form respecting Christ, and the trust which we repose in him. 3. That the rejection of Jesus inevitably involves the unbeliever in interminable and unutterable woe. 4. That the hopes of wicked men, that the divine judgments shall not be inflicted on them, shall prove vain.

The sentiments which were awakened in the breasts of our Lord's enemies by the preceding parable, are exhibited to our contemplation, and the plans which they formed and prosecuted are narrated. In their conduct we behold insincerity, hypocrisy, and malignity. In the conduct of Jesus Christ we have new proofs of his intimate knowledge of what is in man, of the motives which actuate him, of the ends which he pursues; and we have additional illustrations of the wisdom which characterized all that Jesus uttered, and by which he disappointed and exposed the craftiness of his enemies. And we are taught what are the respective rights of God and of Caesar; that, when accurately understood, the duties which we owe to civil governors and the duties which we owe to God, do perfectly harmonize, and that we are bound, as Christians, in the faith and the obedience of the gospel, to have consciences void of offence both toward God and toward man.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we this evening bless thee for the protection of thy providence during the past day, and for the goodness which thou hast made to pass before us. Our short-comings in the discharge of the duties in which we have been engaged, we acknowledge. Our sins, in thought, and word, and deed, we confess. God be merciful to us sinners. Speak peace to us, and let us not again return to folly and to sin. Establish us in the faith of the gospel. May we be begotten again by the word of truth, that we may be a kind of first fruits of thy creatures. May we receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls. May we justly appreciate and carefully improve the privileges we enjoy. Thou didst of old speak unto the fathers by thy servants the prophets; in these last days thou hast spoken to us by thy Son. Forbid, O God, that we should neglect the great salvation of which he is author. We believe in him as the Son of God—the beloved of thee, the Father. O may we reverence him, may we love him, may we obey him, and may the lives which we live in the flesh be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and who gave himself for us. Out of his fulness may we receive grace for grace. May we be complete in him. Like him may we be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Through him may we have a title to the heavenly inheritance; and do thou, by thy word and Spirit, work in us a meetness for the possession and enjoyment of it. May we be steadfast, immovable, always abounding

ing in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour in the Lord shall not be in vain. We pray for the whole human family. May they be blessed in Jesus, and call him blessed. May all who rule over their fellow-men be just. May we, in our respective stations, render to all their due. To the varied circumstances of thy people accommodate the supplies of thy grace. Grant health to the sick, counsel to the perplexed, comfort to the sorrowful, and salvation to the dying. To thee, the Shepherd of Israel, who slumberest not nor sleepest, we commit ourselves and all our interests. Encompass us with thy favour as with a shield. May thy presence ever go with us, and finally may we obtain the rest which remaineth for thy people. And all that we ask is in the name of Jesus. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXVII. 11—14.

SCRIPTURE—JUDGES VI.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—6. The path of duty is the surest way to prosperity. That the Almighty ruleth among the children of men, is often affectingly demonstrated by the judgments with which their iniquities are visited in the present life. The case of Israel, as here recorded, affords an example of this. The cause here expressly assigned for the oppression of Israel by the Midianites, was sin. 'The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord,' and therefore various calamities came upon them. These things are written for our learning. Ver. 7. In the midst of judgment, however, God remembers mercy. When Israel's cry of distress was raised, the Lord not only sent a prophet to reprove them, and to remind them that their rebellion against the God of their fathers was the cause of their present calamities, but also raised up a deliverer for them in the person of Gideon the son of Joash; so that we have, in this act of mercy, a farther confirmation of the doctrine that the path of duty is the surest way to prosperity; for, no sooner do the people, under the pressure of their calamities, return to God, and cry unto him, than the Lord appoints deliverance for them, ver. 14. Thus exhibiting to crying Israel, that view of the divine character which is so beautifully set forth in the words of the prophet, 'Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.' Jer. iii. 12. In calling Gideon to the important enterprise of delivering Israel from the hand of the invading Midianites, God graciously condescends to inspire him with courage and confidence, by giving him signs of his presence and favour, according to Gideon's own request. It is condescension on the part of God to

accept the imperfect services of his creatures, for our best services are defiled with sin; but when our offerings are accepted, and a gracious answer given to our prayers, it is a token of future mercies yet to be bestowed, and an encouragement to us to continue to seek the Lord. And, like Gideon, it becomes us, in entering upon any important undertaking, to seek counsel from God, and to endeavour to discover whether we have the approbation of God in it. These signs were asked by Gideon, in order to confirm his mind, in the full assurance that he was called by God, to take measures for expelling the Midianites from the land; and in these, and various other ways, did it please God, while yet the written revelation of his will was not completed, to intimate his will to man, and to encourage and assure their hearts in the path of duty. And although these ways of answering prayer, and giving us assurance of divine aid, be now discontinued, we are assured, by the unchanging word of the living God, that they who ask shall receive, and that he will be a very present help in the time of need, to all who call upon him.

What an interesting illustration does this passage of scripture afford at once of the judgments and of the mercy of God. His people sin, and are punished—they cry to him and are heard. They forsake the Lord and fall into trouble—they return to the Lord, and find that in him alone is their help. Let us ever remember, then, that the way of sin is the way of death, and that, as it is our duty constantly to serve the Lord, so with that duty is inseparably connected our own happiness.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, we desire to feel that it is of thy mercy that we are permitted to behold the light of this morning, and again to draw near to thee in prayer. We are verily guilty in thy sight, and instead of being the children of many mercies, we might have been visited with the tokens of thine anger. We give thanks at the remembrance of thy mercy; and especially do we desire to bless thee for Jesus Christ the Son of thy love, through whom we have access unto thee; and we now pray thee, for his sake, to pardon all our sins, and to pass by our unnumbered transgressions. Teach us ever to bear in mind, that the way of the wicked shall not prosper, but that there is a great reward to them that keep thy law; for godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. May our minds be habitually under the conviction, that it is in thee we live and move, and that it is by thee our lot is ordered in the world. Let us never forget our dependence upon thee, and do thou ever direct our steps. Surround us with thy favour as with a shield, and give thy holy angels charge concerning us, that our enemies may never obtain dominion over us. Make a hedge of protection about us, and our house, and

all that we have round about, that no evil may befall us, nor any plague come nigh our dwelling. Amid the various pursuits and avocations of this life, may we never forget that one thing is needful, and may we make choice of that good part which will never be taken from us. Looking unto Jesus, may we renounce every other ground of confidence, and may he be made of thee, unto us, wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and complete redemption. May we be effectually called unto fellowship with him, so that having him formed in us the hope of glory, we may be daily growing up unto a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Sanctify us wholly through thy truth, and may the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom. Beautify us with thine own likeness, and clothe us with thy salvation. Through faith in the blood of atonement, may our consciences be purged from dead works to serve the living God. O that Christ may indeed be precious unto us, as he is to all them that believe; and may we feel the constraining influence of his love in our hearts, sweetly drawing us to himself. And grant, that when the journey of life is over, our dwelling-place may be in thy house above for ever. Our friends and brethren we commend unto thee. May all who are connected with us, be interested in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and be kept by thy mighty power through faith unto eternal life. Increase the number of them who believe, and greatly extend the boundaries of the Redeemer's empire, in the increasing diffusion of the gospel. May all nations be blessed in Christ, and all people call him blessed. Let thy good providence watch over us this day, and may the outgoings of the morning and of the evening, be made to rejoice. Prosper us in our lawful affairs, and enrich all our temporal comforts with a blessing. Hear, O Lord, our humble prayer, forgive all our sins, and accept of our persons, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LXI.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE xx. 27—47.

REMARKS.

The sadducees were a sect who denied the doctrine of the resurrection, and believed not in the existence of angels nor spirits. They therefore stood directly opposed to the teaching of Christ upon this point. They here bring forward a case which they

seem to have thought well calculated to embarrass our Saviour in explaining this doctrine, if not altogether to disprove it. They propose for his consideration the case of a woman who had been married successively to seven brethren, and demand of him to show how the claims of these seven brethren were to be determined at the resurrection, and which of them would be acknowledged as her husband. Here, however, as in other cases, when questions of difficulty were proposed to him, our Lord showed his infinite superiority to all his opponents, and exhibited his perfect knowledge of the future as well as of the present condition of mankind. He shows that the ties by which mankind are connected here have no place in the world to come. In that glorious and happy world all are immortal. No man there dies, nor needs a successor. Ver. 34—36. The happiness of the redeemed shall arise from a purer and more permanent source, and their manner of life shall be like the angels in heaven. Ver. 37, 38. Our Lord having thus exposed the futility of this objection to the doctrine of a future state, next draws the attention of his hearers to the proof of this doctrine, which is afforded by the words of God himself, as recorded by Moses, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.' These words were spoken long after these holy men had left this world, so that as God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, they must still have had a living existence, seeing God still called himself their God. Ver. 39, 40. These triumphant replies to the objections of the sadducees, produced a powerful impression upon the people, insomuch that it is said the scribes and pharisees applauded him, and durst not ask him any more questions. Jesus then proposes to them a question relating to himself, which was well calculated to excite reflection, and also to show them that apparent contradictions are not always real ones, and that no doctrine is to be rashly rejected, merely because it may seem to be at variance with our views of consistency and truth. The Messiah was spoken of by the Jews as the son of David, because it was generally believed and admitted that he was to be descended from the family of David. And in the scriptures of the Old Testament, which the Jews themselves acknowledged, David himself speaks of Messiah as his Lord and Master. In proof of this, Jesus here quotes from Psalm cx., where David speaks of him as his Lord, sitting at the right hand of the Father. He therefore asks them how Messiah could be both the Lord and the son of David. This question, it is evident, could be answered satisfactorily only by admitting the pre-existence and divinity of the Messiah. For while, in his human nature, he was a son of David, inasmuch as he was descended of his line, he was at the same time, in his divine nature, not only David's Lord, but the Lord and Master of all men. The evangelist Matthew informs us that no man was able to answer him a word, (Matth. xxii. 46.) He then warns his disciples to beware of the scribes, who, while they made a vain show of religion, and were careful to perform outward acts of devotion, were actuated by a worldly and ambitious spirit, and sought chiefly the applause of men. Let the people of God

rejoice in the blessed hope of eternal life in heaven, where earthly ties and earthly distinctions are unknown. This hope rests upon the sure foundation of the complete atonement and perfect righteousness of him who was David's Lord, and who, in his human nature, came of David's line. Let us cheerfully submit to his teaching, rejecting the cavils of unbelief. Serving him with meekness and fear, let us beware of imitating those who rest satisfied with a form of godliness while destitute of its power, seeking the applause of man rather than the praise of God.

PRAYER.

O most merciful God, we draw near to thee this evening, believing that thou art, and that thou art the bountiful rewarder of all those that truly seek thee. We give praise to thy holy name for the blessed hope of immortality through Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life. O may this hope animate us to a faithful and vigorous prosecution of the Christian warfare, that we may, through grace, obtain the victory over sin and death. Ever looking unto Jesus, and relying on his grace, may we put far away from us all lying vanities, taking his word as the rule of our life, and seeking his Spirit as the sanctifier of our hearts. May we, without wavering, believe on him as the Messiah promised of old, who, in the fulness of time, came into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Through faith in his blood, may we receive the remission of our sins, and by his righteousness imputed unto us, may we be justified; and may our faith be productive of those fruits of holiness which are to thy praise and glory. Teach us ever to bear in mind, that the chief end of man is to glorify thee; and as it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps, be thou graciously pleased to give us of thine own wherewith to serve thee. Make thy grace sufficient for us, and perfect thy strength in our weakness. Carry forward with us the good work of sanctification, until there be formed within us a perfect meetness for glory, honour, and immortality. In the recollection of all thy goodness to us this day, we desire now to offer up our thanksgiving. Thy good providence has watched over us, protecting us from unseen dangers, and loading us with unmerited mercies. And now that the shadows of evening have again closed over our dwelling, we beseech thee to spread over us the shelter of thy protection during the night watches. When we lay us down to sleep, do thou, O Lord, sustain us, and cause us to rest in safety. May we remember thee upon our beds, and may our reins instruct us in the night season. When we awake also, may we remember thee, and may we arise to praise thee. We desire also to bear upon our

minds at the throne of grace, all our brethren of mankind. Bless the whole household of faith, and let the wicked be turned unto thee. Prosper the interests of the kingdom of Christ in every land, and give light to them who sit in darkness, and in the region and shadow of spiritual death. Let thy way be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let our native land be the object of thy peculiar care. In all our borders may there be peace, and in all our dwelling-places may there be presented unto thee the morning and the evening sacrifice. Prosper and protect the true church of Christ, and let thy blessing abide upon all who love her peace. Give consolation to the afflicted, and sanctify all their trials. Bless all dear to us, and connected with us; make them and us partakers of the fulness of Christ, and heirs of the inheritance that is above. Let our humble prayers find acceptance in thy sight, through Jesus Christ, our strength, and our Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XIX. 1—3.

SCRIPTURE—JUDGES VII.

REMARKS.

This chapter begins with an account of Gideon's ready compliance with the call which he had received from God, to march against the Midianites. The Lord showed that success does not depend upon human strength. If the cause be the Lord's, one shall chase a thousand. He employs means for the accomplishment of his purposes, but the very inadequacy of the means in themselves to effect the ends intended, shows that their success is owing to the blessing of God himself. In the present instance, God designed to demonstrate to the Israelites that their rescue was not owing to themselves, but to his mercy, that they might not make it the subject of vain glory. Lest Gideon should be afraid to meet the enemy with so small a force, God encourages him in a very remarkable manner. He commands him to take a companion with him, and go down to the outside of the host of the Midianites during the night, and there listen to what he might hear amongst the enemy. Having gone down accordingly, the Lord so ordered it, that at the very time when Gideon and his companion were listening, there was near by the place where they stood, a man of the Midianites telling a dream to his fellow; which dream was, that he had seen a cake of barley bread come into their camp, and run against one of their tents, and overturn it. His fellow, to whom he told this dream, immediately interpreted it to signify the overthrow of their army by the hand of Gideon. This circumstance showed Gideon that the Midianites were afraid of him, and

he regarded it as a token of his success. He therefore took courage and returned to his own men; engaged in the conflict, as God directed, and obtained a miraculous victory. In this account we may recognise a striking representation of the triumphs of the gospel, which, as preached by the ministers of religion, is as a light in earthen vessels, or a trumpet in the mouths of the Lord's servants, whereby the powers of darkness are discomfited, and the ranks of our spiritual enemies thrown into confusion. The wicked are often, like the Midianites, made the instruments of destroying one another. Mere sound will often frighten those who are engaged in an evil cause. God maketh the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and weak things does he choose to confound the things that are mighty.

While thus we see the thousands of Midian flying at the sound of trumpets, may it not remind us of the terror and dismay which will seize upon the ungodly at the day of judgment, when the last trumpet shall sound, and when destruction shall come upon them without remedy? Let us take warning in time to flee from the wrath to come, and take shelter under the wings of divine love. The last trumpet will have no terrors to them who are in Christ Jesus, for to them there is no condemnation. The sound which will be to the enemies of the Saviour the knell of everlasting death, will be to his ransomed ones the note of triumph, and the call to everlasting gladness.

PRAYER.

O Lord God of hosts, who is like unto thee among the gods; who among the sons of the mighty can be compared unto our God? Thou rulest supreme among the armies of heaven, and doest according to thy will among the children of men. None can stay thy hand from working, or say unto thee, with efficacious voice, What doest thou? Thy people of old, when they trusted in thee, were not put to shame. In the day of battle, thou didst make them strong, and with the breath of thy mouth thou didst scatter the enemy. We desire to give thanks for all the deliverances which thou didst work out for our fathers in former generations, and we rejoice in the assurance therein conveyed to us, their children, that thou wilt be a very present help in the time of trouble. O teach us ever to make thee our confidence, and to bear in mind that while they who are far from thee shall perish, peace shall be the portion of those that seek thee. Convince us of sin, which is the cause of our misery, and lead us to the blood of sprinkling which cleanseth us from all sin. Through faith in the blood of the cross may we be purged from dead works; and may we present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service. Let us not be conformed to this world, but may we be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we

may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Neither let us think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but soberly, according to the measure of faith. Seeing we are not our own, but bought with a price, even with the precious blood of Christ, may we not live unto ourselves, but unto him who died and rose again. May our souls be purified in obeying the truth through the Spirit, and may it be as our meat and drink to do thy holy will. We give thee praise for the rest which thou hast given us during the night, and for the circumstances of peace and comfort in which we have beheld the light of the morning. O let us never forget that sleep is a blessing for which we are indebted to thee, and that when we awake in the morning, it is because thou sustaineest us. May thy gracious hand lead us this day, that we may not swerve from thy commandments. While prosecuting the business of life, may we never let go our integrity, that our hearts may not reproach us so long as we live. May we ever be just and kind to all about us, loving our brethren with pure hearts, fervently. And when the business of the day is over, and we have again assembled together in our peaceful dwelling, may we encompass the family altar, and present unto thee the evening sacrifice, committing ourselves anew to thy gracious protection. We commend to thy care all our friends and relations. Protect them by thy power, and give them their portion with thy chosen and sanctified ones. Forgive our enemies, and dispose us heartily to forgive all who may be unkind to us. Give thy consolations to the sorrowful, and revive the hopes of the contrite and the desponding. Spare useful lives, and take the dying to thyself. All our interests, temporal and spiritual, we commend unto thee; undertake for us in all our undertakings. Be our God and our guide, even unto death, and our portion for ever, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXVII. 21—24.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XXI.

REMARKS.

We are here taught that no man's benevolence is to be estimated by the amount of his giving. A poor man may be a far more charitable and benevolent person than a rich man. He cannot, indeed, give so much as the rich, but he may have a far more hearty and generous desire to give. And therefore his little donation to a needy brother or to

the service of God, may be far more highly valued by Christ, than the larger contribution of the rich man. God estimates not the sum, but the principle which prompts its bestowment. The poor widow who only gave one mite, is here noticed by our Lord, and pointed out by him as having exceeded the rich who, out of their abundance, had cast into the treasury. While this is an encouragement to the poor to serve the Lord with cheerful minds, although with small gifts, it ought to be felt as a severe rebuke to those who cannot part with their money for religion and for God, but with a grumble and a grudge. In what way can we so honourably or so profitably lay out our substance as by lending it to the Lord, providing for our needy brethren, or promoting the cause of the gospel? See remarks on Matt. xxiv., which refer to the destruction of Jerusalem. We may here observe how striking is the representation given of the consternation and dismay by which the inhabitants of that devoted city were to be overwhelmed. And how awfully significant is this representation, when applied to the manifestation of Almighty power, at the end of the world, when these signs shall proclaim the consummation of all things, and when the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Such fore-warnings are well calculated to impress the mind, and to fill the conscience with a salutary dread of the Almighty's power. Accordingly, our Lord exhorts them to take heed to those things, that they might thereby be stirred up to diligent preparation. While the intimations of this destruction, given by our Lord, left all without excuse, the assurances with which it was accompanied, of all needful support and consolation to his own people, were designed to fortify their minds in the prospect of trial. And as the things which were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope, the grounds of confidence here set forth shall be cause of assurance and hope to believers in every age of the church. Let the people of God rest assured, that whatever tumults or commotions they may witness among the nations of the earth, or whatever trials they may be destined to pass through, they shall never cease to be the objects of their Saviour's love, and shall at last lift up their heads with joy. The Lord knoweth how to deliver his people out of temptation.

PRAYER.

O thou who dwellest in the heavens, and whose kingdom ruleth over all, who shall not fear thee and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy? With humility and godly fear we desire to think of thy greatness and of thy glorious excellency; and with shame and contrition we acknowledge that we have sinned against thy divine majesty. Justly mightest thou write bitter things against us in thine anger. We confess that we have often neglected duty, and often been unthankful for mercies. We draw near to thee in the all-prevailing name of our gracious Redeemer, beseeching thee to have mercy upon our unright-

eousness, and to purge away all our sin. O may we ever be enabled to look by faith to the blood of the cross, and to build upon the sure foundation which thou hast laid in Zion. May the blessings of the covenant be applied to us by the Spirit, and our souls sealed to the day of redemption. And as we know not in what hour the Son of man cometh, may we be ever watching. Considering that the time is short, may we number our days, and apply our hearts to wisdom. If in our future pilgrimage, trials should be appointed to us, may we experience thy promised consolations. And seeing we are pilgrims and strangers here below, may we ever look forward to the appearing of the great God and our Saviour, believing that our redemption draweth nigh. May the solemnizing conviction that these heavens and this earth shall pass away, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and that all kindreds and nations of the world shall be assembled to judgment, stimulate us to fidelity and zeal in thy service, and to unwearied preparation for the coming of our Lord. Grant, most gracious God, that when that solemn day shall come, we may meet our Redeemer with joy, and be welcomed by him into the paradise above. We pray that all our friends and kindred may be interested in the great salvation, and may be preserved by thy mighty power, through faith, unto eternal life. May the sick and the sorrowful be the objects of thy tender care and divine compassion. May the afflictions of the afflicted be sanctified, and may the sorrows of the sorrowful be exchanged for joy. May such as are drawing near to death be prepared for a happy eternity. In the solemn prospect of death, may they be enabled to commit their spirits into the hands of the divine Redeemer, in the blissful hope of that crown of life which he will bestow upon all his faithful followers. We desire to offer up our thanksgiving for all our family comforts. Thou art giving us day by day our daily bread, and year by year our annual supply. Thou hast instituted those endearing relationships whereby we are made helpers and comforters to one another in this vale of tears. O may we never forget to offer up to thee the incense of our thankfulness. Thy kind providence has watched over us this day, and made our going out and our coming in to be in peace. We commit ourselves to thy fatherly care and guardianship through the night watches. May we enjoy quiet and refreshing sleep. Bring us to the light of thy holy day in health of body and soundness of mind, and prepare us for the services of thy house of prayer. May we keep thy day holy,

accounting it the holy of the Lord, and honourable. And in thy great mercy fit us for the purer services of thy temple above, through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

SEVENTEENTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXX.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LI.

REMARKS.

This is the psalm of a believer who has fallen into sin, and is seeking, with all his heart, new peace and new holiness. If any that know the Saviour, have fallen into sin and darkness, you will find here the only way of return. May the Spirit write it in our hearts. In the very first verse, observe the only thing that draws the soul to seek the face of God; it is 'the loving-kindness of God, the multitude of his tender mercies.' It is a look at Calvary; a sight of the face of Jesus which alone can draw our back-slidden heart to cry, 'Have mercy upon me.' But looking unto Jesus makes the soul feel the sinfulness of sin. Ver. 3—5. O what a depth of contrition is here expressed! What a sense of infinite unworthiness; what self-abhorrence is here! Have we ever experienced these feelings? An unawakened heart will never confess sin; but when Christ is really revealed to the soul, he cries, 'I acknowledge my transgressions.' Our sin then appears like a huge dark cloud, or like mountains of division between us and God: 'My sin is ever before me.' And herein the exceeding sinfulness of sin appears; it is done against God! The believer was in the love of God; how basely he has left it. The blood of Emmanuel spoke peace to his conscience; he has trampled it under foot. The Holy Spirit dwelt in him; he has vexed the Holy Spirit: 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.' Nothing but this stops the mouth, and makes us feel worthy of hell. And whence did this sin come? 'Out of the heart.' And how came I by such a heart? 'Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' This is the very depth of self-loathing. None have felt it but God's children. May the Spirit open up these fountains of godly sorrow in our hearts this morning. But if we are sitting within sight of the cross, we will not be contented with merely loathing ourselves. We will seek complete forgiveness and new holiness. Ver. 6—12. Looking to the blood of the Lamb, the divine surety who died for the ungodly, we will say, 'Purge me.' Remembering how often the record that God hath given concerning his Son, has been sweetest music to our soul in time past, calming our troubled hearts, we cry, 'Make me to hear joy and gladness.' What complete forgiveness is demanded in ver. 9. 'Blot out all mine iniquities.' But will the soul that looks to Jesus be content with forgiveness only? No; he will pray, 'Create in me a clean heart.' O we must be created

again if we are to be kept from sin. It is not good resolutions, or promises, or education, that will keep our soul from sin. We must be new created, renewed, born again. To be in the presence of God, and to have his Holy Spirit dwelling in us, make up the chief joy of which we are capable in this world. To be in God, and God in us, the smile of our Father in heaven, and the upholding of the indwelling Comforter on earth; O let us pray for these things. What a change forgiveness and a new heart make in our conduct toward the world. Ver. 13—17. 1. We love to lead others to the same blessedness: 'Then will I teach transgressors thy ways.' O who can invite sinners so willingly as one who has been himself forgiven. May all ministers of the gospel plead in this spirit this day. 2. We love to sing aloud of his righteousness. The righteousness of Jesus is indeed altogether lovely, and we should express our admiration and our joy, by singing praises. Our lips have been long sealed in divine things. O if God has opened them let us show forth his praises; yet meekly remembering our sin, with a broken and contrite heart. 3. We love Zion. The world care not for the affliction of Joseph. But if we have been brought to peace and holiness, we must pray: 'Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion.' O for the time when the sabbath shall dawn on every dwelling in our land, and on every shore of our world.

PRAYER.

Our Father which art in heaven, we thank thee for the quiet rest of the past night, and the mercies of the present morning. But far more we bless thee for the wonders thou hast done for our souls. We acknowledge our transgressions, O give us to feel the infinite weight of them, the infinite vileness of them. Against thee, thee only, have we sinned; against thee, our heavenly Father; we have sinned against thee, O Saviour, in counting thy blood an unholy thing; we have sinned against thee, O Holy Spirit. We cannot justify ourselves. Ever since we were born, we have been hell-deserving in thy sight. Behold we were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us. But we know that there is forgiveness with thee; we know that thy glorious Son died for the ungodly, and we remember how he said, Look unto me all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved. Lord, we look to Jesus, may we be saved. Wash us in his blood, and we shall be whiter than snow. Make us to hear this day joy and gladness, that our broken bones may rejoice. Thou that didst open the heart of Lydia, open our hearts to attend to the things that are spoken. May we feel this day that our sins are forgiven us, for his name's sake. Hide thy face from our sins, and blot out all our iniquities. And now, O Lord, if thou hast forgiven us, if we are indeed in the light of thy countenance, if thy servants have found favour in thy sight, give us a token for good; make us new crea-

tures. We are the clay, and thou art our potter, for we are all the work of thy hand. Create in us a clean heart. We have no confidence in ourselves. Thou alone art able to keep us from falling. Cast us not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from us. Restore unto us the joy of thy salvation, and uphold us with thy free Spirit. Grant, O Lord, that we may this day feel forgiveness so sweet, and be so filled with the Holy Ghost, that we shall teach transgressors thy ways, and that sinners may be converted unto thee. Especially we pray, that all thy faithful servants in the ministry, may this day speak because they believe. Lord, take them into thy council, fill them with thy Spirit. Let them come behind in no gift, and may they speak the word boldly as they ought to speak. May our souls be refreshed, quickened, edified. May weary sinners be led to Jesus, and to rest, and may sinners this day be converted unto thee. Help us to sing anew of thy righteousness. Open our lips, and our mouth shall show forth thy praise. Help us to offer thee a broken spirit. May we never open our mouth any more but in praises, because thou hast been pacified toward us. Remember thine ancient people the Jews. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion. Fulfil all thy rich promises to them. Build thou the walls of Jerusalem. May Christ be preached this day in every land. Give testimony to the word of thy grace. And may his glorious name be blessed for ever. Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Then shall our prayers be ended, and our praises be begun for eternity. Unto him who alone is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think; unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LIV. 4.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS LII. LIII. LIV.

REMARKS.

IN PSALM LII. ver. 1—4. we have a vivid description of the Christless soul, or perhaps, as some think, of antichrist—the man of sin. He not only sins, but boasts of his sin, so that he is a monument of God's long-suffering. His tongue is crafty and cutting like a razor, wounding deeply with but a small movement. Like animals that devour all they meet, so his tongue spares none. Surely even now there are many antichrists; this is the natural character of us all. Ver. 5. But mark his doom! the expression is tripled to show the sureness and dreadfulness of

it. He shall be like a tree uprooted and carried away by the whirlwind. Jude repeats this awful sentence, 'trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.' Ver. 6. Who will be witnesses of their fall? 'The righteous shall see.' Like Abram looking towards Sodom; like Moses and the Israelites, looking back on the Egyptians drowned, so Christ's people shall see the destruction of antichrist, and of all unbelievers. A dreadful joy shall fill their breasts; we do not know the feeling now. May we be among them that shall see, and fear, and laugh with holy joy. Ver. 7—9. Mark the song of the righteous. Are we planted in the house of God? Once we were like wild trees in the wilderness. Have we been transplanted by a divine hand? Are we green—fresh—full of the Spirit? Such only will join the song of Moses and the Lamb.

PSALM LIII. ver. 1. also begins with a description of the Christless soul. He is a fool; this will yet be seen before an assembled universe; he wishes that there were no God; he says it in his heart: this is our natural condition. Ver. 2. But who can tell this; who can see our hearts? God can. 'God looked down.' O what a sight meets his holy eye every moment. Read what he says (ver. 3, 4.) he sees a universal back-going from God and holiness—a complete pollution, not an individual answering the end of his being; a senseless opposition of his people; they think no more of destroying them than of eating bread, like Joseph's brethren when they put their brother into the pit, or like the Persian king and Haman. (Est. iii. 15.) This word should teach us that we are 'all under sin,' that every mouth must be stopped, and all the world stand guilty before God.' But the psalm changes (ver. 5.), God will yet appear in behalf of his own people. Terrible will be the destruction of their enemies. O let us long for the time when God's ancient Israel, and all God's people, shall be gathered into one; when there shall be one Shepherd, and one sheepfold.

IN PSALM LIV. ver. 1—3. the suffering Saviour, or one of his suffering members, prays. Persecution will be our lot if we are Christ's, and prayer will be our relief. Selah marks a pause; he waits for an answer; he prays and looks up. If we would pray aright, we should have many Selahs. Ver. 4. We have a burst of joy; amazed at God's answering so suddenly, he cries, 'Behold! God is mine helper.' O how little we believe that God does answer prayer.

Learn how blessed it is to uphold the soul of a fainting disciple; how dreadful to be opposed to one of these little ones. The psalm concludes with praise for the help given. In every thing we should give thanks; we should do this freely, not grudgingly, but willingly; generously, of a ready mind, with this free spirit, for God loveth a cheerful giver.

PRAYER.

O most blessed God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; let our prayer come before thee like incense, and the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. When the shades of evening draw close around us, do thou, by

thy blessed Spirit, draw near and make thine abode with us, for the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. Deal bountifully with thy servants, that we may live and keep thy word. Open our eyes, that we may see wondrous things out of thy law. How truly thy word which we have read, describes the condition of every one of us as we are in ourselves. O Lord, thou knowest what is in man. O Lord, convince us of sin; may we never open our mouth to defend ourselves any more. May we stand guilty before thee, for in thy sight there shall no flesh living be justified. If thou wert to deal with us as we are in ourselves, thou wouldst destroy us for ever; thou wouldst root us out of the land of the living, thou wouldst cut us off in thy truth. But thou hast not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities; we flee to the refuge which thou hast provided for the ungodly, we would lay our hands upon the head of the divine Lamb, we would take him as our surety. Lord, increase our faith. To us who believe, make Christ still more precious. May he be the desire of our hearts, fairer to us than the children of men, the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Enable us to cleave to him with full purpose of heart. May we be filled this night with joy, and with the Holy Ghost. We pray to be made holy. Into thy hand we commend our spirits; thou hast redeemed us, Lord God of truth. Purify us unto thyself a peculiar family, zealous of good works. Make our heart like a well watered garden. Take out every root of bitterness. Implant every grace in us; make us like a green olive tree in the house of God. May thy Spirit dwell in us, and may we be filled with all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto thy praise and glory. Help us not to be afraid of our enemies; we know that if we live godly in the world, we must suffer persecution. Enable us to say, Behold, God is mine helper, the Lord is with them that uphold my soul. Help us to praise thee for all that thou hast done for our souls. Follow the services of this holy day with thy blessing, which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow. May the Spirit be given us as on the day of Pentecost. May many be pricked in their hearts, and this night asking the way to Zion, with their face thitherward. May thy children be filled with peace, and with thy Holy Spirit. O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion; may Israel, through our mercy, speedily obtain mercy. May they be like a dew from the Lord, in the midst of many peoples. Thy kingdom come. Keep us looking for that

blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of him, who is the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. May we be among those that shall be made like him, for we shall see him as he is. Give us this night the sleep of thy beloved, watch over our dwelling, help our dear friends, comfort all that mourn, and let peace be upon Israel. May the words of our mouth, and the meditations of our heart, be acceptable with thee, through Jesus Christ our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 33.

SCRIPTURE—JUDGES IX.

REMARKS.

We have here a most instructive history. Though all but Jotham seem to have been ungodly persons, yet we may learn many lessons from them. The two last verses form the moral of the whole, namely, that God will render a recompense to the wicked. Abimelech was a vain and godless youth. This is plain; 1. From his name; it means 'My Father is King.' He was a concubine's son, and yet he assumes this title probably through vanity. How foolish is family pride; what a mark of our fallen nature! 2. From his craft and falsehood, ver. 2. He insinuates that all Gideon's sons wanted to reign over Israel, whereas it is likely they were of Gideon's mind, viii. 23. 3. From his idolatry. 'They gave him silver out of the house of Baal-berith.' 4. From his companions; 'vain and light persons.' A man is known by his company. We should be companions of all them that fear God. 5. From his cruelty in killing his brethren. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

It is pleasant to turn to Jotham. He alone escaped, when his brothers were murdered, and seem to have been a very remarkable person. 1. Of great courage. When the whole multitude were making Abimelech king, he stood upon the top of the hill that overlooks Shechem, and fearlessly upbraided them with their ingratitude. We should add to our faith, courage. 2. Of remarkable parts. His parable is the most ancient, and one of the most beautiful, ever composed. We should pray for both grace and gifts. 3. Under the guidance of God; for he declares prophetically that fire would come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem. And yet he had to run away and hide himself. If we be God's children, we must suffer persecution. The world is not our rest.

Ver. 22. Abimelech reigned three years in peace. God waited three years to see if this barren fig-tree would bear fruit: but he found none. The Spirit strives long with men, but not always. At the end of that time, God stirred up rebellion in Shechem. He raised up Gaal the son of Ebed, 'the son of a slave,' to oppose Abimelech. 'Here was one braver

ble contesting with another; we should look upon war as one of the arrows of God's bow.

In the destruction of the Shechemites, see how God fulfils his word. His eye did not pity, neither did he spare. The fire came out of the bramble, and devoured the cedars of Lebanon. Let us believe the threatenings of God. He will fulfill all his word.

In the death of Abimelech, let us see the end of wicked men. 'A woman cast a piece of a mill-stone upon his head, and all to break his skull.' Did he spend his last moments in seeking pardon and peace with God? Does he cry out, What must I do to be saved? no: his last word is to his armour-bearer, 'Draw thy sword and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him.' Alas, and is this all? He saved his honour, but he lost his soul! 'What shall it profit us if we gain the whole world, and lose our own soul?'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art light, and in thee there is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with thee and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth. Help us to walk in the light, as thou art in the light, and then we shall have fellowship with thee, and the blood of Jesus Christ thy Son cleanseth us from sin. We praise thee for all thy care of us ever since we had a being. How precious are thy thoughts unto us, O God; how great is the sum of them. If we should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when we awake we are still with thee. But far more we praise thee for the unspeakable gifts of thy grace. Thou hast loved us with an everlasting love, and therefore, with loving-kindness hast thou drawn us. We praise thee for thy holy sabbath day. If any secure sinners have been awakened to cry, God be merciful to me a sinner, thy holy name be praised. If any afflicted soul, tempest-tossed and not comforted, has been brought to rest on the finished work of Emmanuel, thy holy name be praised. If any of thy dear children have been brought to know more of Jesus, to receive more of the Comforter, to walk more closely with thee, thy holy name be praised. For all the light, and peace, and quickening, which our souls have received out of thy law, we bless thy holy name. We will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened us. We praise thee for thy holy word which we have read this morning. We know that whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, may have hope. Make this scripture profitable to us for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness. Grant, O Lord, that we, being united to the Lord Jesus, and receiving daily supplies

of thy Holy Spirit, may be renewed in the spirit of our minds. Make us partakers of the divine nature, that we may escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Free us from the sins of Abimelech, for they are the very sins of our natural heart. Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken us in thy way. Remove from us the way of lying, and grant us thy law graciously. Hide that word of thine in our hearts, Lie not one to another, for ye are members one of another. Make us companions of all them that fear thee, and keep thy precepts; may we know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. Make us merciful, as our Father in heaven is merciful, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as thou for Christ's sake hast forgiven us. Put into our hearts all the graces that were in the heart of Jotham. Make us bold in thy cause. Help us not to be ashamed of Christ, in this crooked and perverse generation. Help us to speak of thy testimonies before kings, and not to be ashamed. Fill us with the wisdom that cometh down from above; make us wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. Above all, give us thy holy guidance. May the opening of our lips be right things. May our speech this day be with grace, seasoned with salt, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. Lord, teach us how surely thou hast appointed a day in which thou shalt judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom thou hast ordained. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? May we be found in Christ in that day, washed, covered, justified, accepted in the Beloved. When thou renderest the evil of the wicked upon their own heads, may we obtain mercy of the Lord in that day. Be with all our dear friends. May the word and prayer be blessed to them. Be with all who are sick and afflicted; make all their bed to them in their sickness. Make us compassionate as Christ was. Preserve our going out and coming in this day. May peace be upon Israel; and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with our spirits. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXXV.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XXII. 1—34.

REMARKS.

We have here the treachery of Judas, the great love of Jesus, the vanity of the disciples, and the presumption of Peter. 1. The treachery of Judas, ver. 1—6. Observe the coincidence; 'the priests

sought how they might kill Jesus, then entered satan into Judas.' These coincidences are of satan's contriving. Observe the power of satan; he desires to have believers, but he enters into Judas.' Unconverted souls are the palace of the strong one. He goes in and out at his pleasure. 'If a minister be not a man of God, he has great reason to fear lest he become a man of the devil.' It is the love of money which opens the heart to satan.

2. The great love of Christ, ver. 7—23. With what divine calmness he sends his two disciples to provide the last passover in the large upper room. O that our hearts were enlarged and furnished to receive the Saviour. 'They went and found as he had said unto them.' When he says, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish'—when he says, 'Come unto me and I will give you rest'—when he says, 'I will send the Comforter,' believe his word; for in all things we shall find as he said unto us. What intense affection does he show during the eating of the passover? 'With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you.' The disciples should have said this—we should say it; but Christ is more willing to give himself than we to receive him. What love he shows in instituting the Lord's supper at such a time! Instead of thinking of himself and his coming agonies, he is thinking how to comfort his people till he come again. If we accept of this bread and this wine, we solemnly declare that we do close with the broken Saviour. Have we closed with Christ? The hand of the betrayer was on the table. It is to be feared that many betraying hands are still placed on that table. Woe is here written against all such. Let us examine ourselves, and apply to Christ to solve the doubtful case, saying, 'Lord, is it I?' 3. The vanity of the disciples. At this solemn hour they strive who shall be greatest. O Lord, what a proud worm is man. This is our very nature. Let us pray to be delivered from pride, especially after solemn seasons. It is far happier to be like Christ; 'I am among you as he that serveth.' Does the Saviour cast them away because of this foolish pride? No: he covers their sin in his own blood; sees no iniquity in them; commends their perseverance; promises them thrones of glory. O what a Saviour is ours! 'One among a thousand.' 'Who is a God like unto thee, who pardoneth iniquity?' 4. The presumption of Peter, ver. 31—34. Satan desires to have Christians more than other men. If we have been turned from the power of satan unto God, be sure satan will try to recover his prey. Learn that satan has no power at all against a Christian, except it be given him from above. He has to beg for it. Peter was to be most tempted of the twelve, Jesus therefore says, 'I have prayed for thee.' If we are much tempted believers, we may be sure we are much prayed for by Christ. His prayer will not fail; so our faith will not. 'We shall never perish.' Peter disregards this sweet promise; feels it unnecessary, perhaps insulting: 'Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death.' 'How much presumption is in man! the stronger he believes himself to be, the weaker is he.' 'A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.' O let us not be high-minded, but fear.

PRAYER.

Our heavenly Father, follow with thy blessing the reading of thy holy word. Hide in our hearts the very lessons it was intended to teach us. Sanctify us through thy truth; thy word is truth. When we read of Judas, O Lord, teach us to be very jealous over ourselves, and to inquire diligently, lest after all we also should be cast away. Show us that we may know much of the Saviour, that we may call him, Lord, Lord, that we may do wonders in his name, and yet betray him after all. Convince us of sin by thy Holy Spirit. Make us lie infinitely low before thee because of our vileness. Convince us that we never can justify ourselves in thy pure sight. Give us a soul-refreshing view of the excellency of the Lord Jesus. Give us a saving hold upon him as all our righteousness and all our strength. Give us to be vitally united to him as living branches to the true vine. Make us confident that he which hath begun a good work in us will perform it to the day of Christ Jesus. When we read that the disciples found every thing as Jesus had said unto them, make us to set to our seal that this is true. O Saviour, it is impossible with thee to lie; thou keepest truth for ever. O Lord, help us to believe that we shall find as thou hast said. Melt our hearts by a sight of the great love of Jesus. As he gave himself to be broken for us, so may we freely accept of him, and may our joy be full. Make us to love that holy ordinance wherein we testify that we close with him as all our salvation and all our desire. May we love to do this in remembrance of him. When we read of thy disciples striving who should be greatest, may we be ashamed of the sins that mingle with our holiest services. O Lord, we blush when we think of our sins. How often we have sinned thy love away. Plead thy blood and righteousness, O our risen Saviour, our advocate with the Father. Cover all our sins. Say to us, Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more. Change our proud, selfish hearts. Give us the same mind which also was in Christ Jesus. Give us to wash one another's feet; to do to one another as Jesus did unto us. Lord, deliver us from our spiritual enemies. Let us not be ignorant of satan's devices. We know that he desires to have us more than the world, that he may sift us like wheat. O Saviour, pray for us, that our faith may not fail. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Help us to submit ourselves to thee: to resist the devil, and he will flee from us. Guard us during the silent watches of this night. Thou that keepest Israel never slumberest nor sleepest. Keep our dear

friends from evil. Preserve their souls. Strengthen the sick upon the bed of languishing. Comfort the bereaved. Give bread to the poor. Be with those that are afar off upon the sea. Pour out thy Spirit upon all flesh. Let the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Hasten the coming of the Saviour. Make us love his appearing. Why is thy chariot so long of coming; why tarry the wheels of thy chariot? Glory be to thee, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 34—37.

SCRIPTURE—JUDGES XIII. XIV.

REMARKS.

Israel, on account of their sins, are now in the hand of their enemies, and it seems to have been in consequence of the relentings of Israel, and in answer to their prayers, that God now determined to grant them a deliverer, more highly endowed, and more specially under the influence of the Spirit, than any of the judges that had recently preceded him.

Samson, like Isaac, and Samuel, and John the Baptist, was the child of a previously unfruitful marriage; and like them too, was expressly foretold by revelation from heaven. These circumstances were, doubtless, designed to mark him out, from his infancy, as destined to hold an important office in the execution of the divine will. But the miraculous birth of all these eminent servants of heaven, was mainly intended to distinguish them as types and forerunners of Christ, the great judge of his people. The 'angel' that appeared to Manoah and his wife was the divine 'Word,' who had often appeared to the fathers, who afterwards became flesh. This might be gathered from several points in the narrative; but it is proved by the 18th verse, in which the word translated 'secret,' is the same that in Isaiah (ix. 6.), when undoubtedly applied to Christ, is rendered 'Wonderful;' and it is with an obvious allusion to this title, that, in the 19th verse, he is said to have done 'wondrously.' The faith of Manoah was languid and undecided till the promises made to him had been confirmed by further proofs. It was his distrust of what had already been revealed to his wife, that induced him to pray, 'O my Lord, let the man of God whom thou didst send, come again unto us.' True, he added, 'and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.' Still, the last part of the petition seems to express, rather the ostensible, than the real object of his prayer; for it conveys a request which was already answered. And accordingly, the angel, on his second appearance, simply repeated his former charges; adding, 'of all that I said unto the woman, let her be-

ware, and all that I commanded her, let her observe. It was in this spirit of uneasy faith that Manoah sought to detain the angel; and that, at the close of the interview, he said, with horror and alarm, to his wife, 'we shall surely die, because we have seen God.' He believed, but his faith wanted vigour and repose. The wondrous doings of the angel seem to have been designed, as they were perfectly adapted, to supply this defect.

The proposed alliance of Samson with the woman of Timnath, was expressly contrary to the law of the Nazarite, by which he was bound, and the remonstrances of Manoah and his wife were supported by the highest authority. For though it be said (xiv. 4.) to have been of the Lord that he sought an occasion against the Philistines, we are not therefore to conclude, either that his irregular affection had been directly prompted by the Spirit, or that it was purposely fostered by himself, with the view of obtaining a just cause of quarrel against his country's oppressors. 'Let no man,' (says James, i. 13, 14.) 'say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.' Both in the cases of the Timnathite and afterwards of Delilah, Samson transgressed the command of God, and God signally vindicated his own ordinance, while yet he overruled the guilty passions of this man to promote his own designs, 'making even the wrath of man to praise him,' and the wickedness of man to correct him.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, we bless thee, that we are permitted to approach thee this morning, with our humble adorations. In the remembrance of thy glory and goodness, we would rejoice and be glad exceedingly, for thou hast graciously discovered them in thy dealings with us. Stir up within us a lively sense of that tender mercy of thine, which is over all thy works; and pour out upon us the spirit of supplication, and of prayer, that when we bow before thy throne, our fellowship may truly be with thee, and with thy Son, Jesus Christ. The day, O God, is thine; the night also is thine; thou hast prepared the light and the sun. In mercy hast thou prepared them for our infirmities; and in wisdom hast thou adapted them to our necessities. We thank thee for the rest of the night, in which thou, who givest thy beloved sleep, hast watched over us, thyself neither slumbering nor sleeping. We thank thee, that thou hast brought us in safety to the morning light; and that ere the busy pursuits of day have called us apart, we are permitted, as a united family, to present ourselves before thee, in the assured hope of obtaining a father's blessing. O do thou mercifully accept of our thanksgivings, and hear us in heaven. Thou, O most gracious God, know-

est to what dangers and temptations we shall each be this day exposed; and thou, who art a heart-searching, and rein-trying God, knowest what evil dispositions are lurking in our hearts, ready to betray us into sin. O grant us thy grace accordingly. Especially grant us a spiritual sense of guilt, and a humbling apprehension of our own weakness. Forbid that we should go forth to our worldly employments, in a worldly spirit. Forbid that these employments should excite in us the accursed love of the world, or the covetousness which is idolatry. While striving to be diligent in lawful business, may we also be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, doing all to thy glory. O keep and bless us, in soul and body, through all the business and events of the day, that, when evening shall return with its quiet and repose, we may meet again, a happy and united family, at thy holy altar, there to pledge ourselves anew to thy service, and to have our languid sentiments of piety refreshed from thy sacred presence. Bless, O God, that portion of thy word which has now engaged our thoughts; may its lessons be brought home to our hearts, with demonstration of the Spirit, and with power. We give thee thanks that we have the privilege of living under a settled government, and are not left, as sheep without a shepherd, every man to do what is right in his own eyes. Bless, O God, the civil authorities which thou hast set over us. May that portion of thy power which thou hast entrusted to them, be exercised for thy glory, and the good of the people. Grant that we, under the shadow of their protection, may be enabled, by thy grace, to lead lives of faith and holiness; resting with an unwavering firmness on thy promises, which are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Having no confidence in the flesh, but looking exclusively to the merits of Jesus, our blessed Saviour, as the only ground of our acceptance with thee, may we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. And, O God, give us that charity which is the bond of perfectness, that we may walk in love as Christ also hath loved us. In these our prayers, do thou graciously hear us. Mercifully forgive our sins; and to thy name, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all glory ascribed, now and for ever. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM xcvi. 1—4.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE xxii. 35—71.

REMARKS.

1. It is not easy to ascertain our Lord's precise meaning in the paragraph extending from the 35th verse to the 38th. Looking generally at the passage, there can be no doubt that his object is to warn his disciples of a great change which was about to take place in their circumstances. The time drew nigh, when 'this,' said he, 'that is written, (Isa. liii. 12.) must be accomplished in me; and he was reckoned among the transgressors;' for the things concerning me have an end. Taking in connection with what he had said immediately before, this intimation is substantially the same with that given, (Mat. xxvi. 31.) 'All ye shall be offended because of me this night, for it is written,' (Zech. xiii. 7.) 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.' Hitherto, notwithstanding the ill will of the Jewish leaders, Christ's influence and acceptability among the people has secured him the means of protecting and providing for his disciples; so that when sent out, (ver. 35.) by two and two, they 'lacked nothing.' But now circumstances are changed, the difficulties and changes vastly increased, and they must make all lawful and prudent provision for their subsistence and defence, without trusting to the personal presence and aid of their Master.

2. There is one feature of our Lord's sufferings in Gethsemane, that none of the evangelists, except Luke, has noticed. John, indeed, omits all that took place there, previously to his apprehension; Matthew and Mark describe him as saying, 'my soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death;' but Luke adds, (ver. 44.) that he was 'in an agony,' and that his 'sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' It is not in man fully to lay open the mystery of that fearful distress, either in its causes or its extent. But the scene is evidently fitted for Christian contemplation. The penitent, weeping over it, feels that his sins, sins which he can recount and particularize, added to the load of sorrow which then crushed the heart of the Saviour, and that these sufferings, mysterious, because in their measure, if not also in their nature, they lay beyond the range of mortal experience, formed part of the price exacted by the Father, and paid down by the Son, for his ransom.

3. A lesson of a different order, and one of very grave practical moment, is taught us by the conduct of Peter, ver. 54—61. That disciple was at all times remarkable for the fiery vehemence of his temper; and here it betrayed him into an act of cruel and cowardly baseness. When forewarned of his danger, he protested (ver. 33.) that he was ready to go with his Master 'both into prison, and to death.' In the fervour of his zeal he drew a sword when Jesus was seized, (John xviii. 10.) and 'smote a servant of the high priest.' Dismayed, however, by our Lord's reproof, (John xviii. 11.) he immediately fell behind, and when Jesus was brought into the

high priest's house, 'followed afar off,' as a trembling spectator. Still, even then, he displayed more courage than any of his brethren, John excepted; for while the rest all 'forsook' their Master 'and fled,' (Mat. xxvi. 56.) they two continued to follow him, John xviii. 15. It was when he stood without at the door, (John xviii. 16.) and saw Jesus yielding meekly to his enemies, without any attempt at defence, or means of resistance, that Peter's heart utterly failed. An hour ago, he had affirmed his readiness to go with Jesus even to death; and now he vehemently and repeatedly denies all knowledge of him. The prophecy of our Lord (ver. 34.) was fulfilled; and there was given to all succeeding Christians a most emphatic, because a living commentary, on the text (1 Cor. x. 12.) 'let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' Oh, how earnestly and how unceasingly should we pray for the grace of humility as a fixed and vital element of character.

4. From the penitent disciple weeping bitterly without, let the reader turn to observe what is passing within the palace. They that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. This was their 'hour, and the power of darkness.' Having blindfolded him, they 'struck him on the face,' and scoffingly asked, 'prophesy who it was that smote thee.' But his miraculous gifts were not to be prostituted at their base pleasure, and therefore he was silent, 'as a sheep before her shearers is dumb.' 'Many other things,' it is added, 'blasphemously spake they against him.' And what then restrained the wrath of God, that the very lightnings of heaven were not aroused to deliver and avenge his eternal Son. What withheld that stricken One himself that he called not for 'twelve legions of angels,' who were ready (Mat. xxvi. 53.) to come 'presently' at his call. It was because he loved us unto the death, that though 'he saved others,' (Mat. xxvii. 42.) 'himself he could not save.'

PRAYER.

Our Father who art in heaven, again we lift up our voices to thee, our unseen, but ever present and gracious protector. What, O Lord, is man, that thou rememberest him? Children of the dust, and of a day, we are crushed before the moth, and from the highest pride of life must look forward to the grave as our resting-place. Guilty and corrupt, we have incurred thy just displeasure, and deserve no better a doom than to lie down with everlasting burnings. Yet would we exalt thy name together, because thou hast had compassion on us in our low estate, because thou hast visited and redeemed thy people. Though thou art the high and lofty One who inhabitest eternity, thou dwellest also with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Not unto us, O God, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory. Thou didst send thine only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have ever-

lasting life. We bless thee, O God, for what we have this evening heard of his sufferings in our behalf. We thank thee for the evidence which these sufferings afford of his intense and enduring love of man, and while we contemplate his incomprehensible agony, may we not only feel the stirrings of human sympathy, but may our souls also be led to loathe the sin whose guilt was laid upon him, and to cleave to him with confidence and love, as all our salvation and all our desire. To as many as receive him, thou givest power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name. May we so receive him by faith, and may he be formed in us, and abound the hope of glory. And, O God, enable us, under the inevitable calamities of life, to take him for our example in suffering. May we feel that even hereunto are we called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. Through thy grace, may we, under every trial, and in our hours of darkest apprehension, be enabled to say from the heart, It is God, let him do what seemeth good in his sight; the cup which the Father hath given us, shall we not drink it? not our will, but thine be done. And especially, O God, grant us the grace of humility and meekness. May we watch always, and with a godly jealousy over our own hearts, knowing them to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. We look to thee, O Lord our God, for rest and protection throughout the night. In the insensibility of sleep, do thou watch over us, and so long as thou shalt hold our eyes waking, be our song in the night season, and let trouble be far from us. May our last conscious thoughts be of thee, and the great salvation which thou hast wrought for us, and when we awake may we still be with thee. Hear these our prayers, pardon our sins, and do to us, and for us more than we ask or think, for the sake of Christ Jesus, our strength and Redeemer. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVI. 7—11.

SCRIPTURE—JUDGES XV.

REMARKS.

The foxes here mentioned are that species known more definitely by the term 'jackal,' a creature which abounds in Palestine. In commemoration of his victory Samson called that place Ramath-lehi, that is, the lifting up, or rather, perhaps, the hill of the jaw-bone. Being distressed with thirst, in consequence of his exertions, he prayed to God, who

'clave a hollow place that was in Lehi,' (for the word translated 'the jaw,' in ver. 19. ought certainly to be read thus, as a proper name,) 'and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived.'

Throughout the whole of these transactions, two circumstances are chiefly remarkable. First, the reader is struck with the singular manner in which Samson's private sentiments and fortunes are mixed up with the political condition of his country, and in which, besides, both of these are connected with the divine purposes. Were we to withdraw from the narrative those inspired notices of the Spirit's interposition, which give a unity and directness of aim to otherwise dissimilar and separate events, we should find, in the story of Samson, no more than could be paralleled by a thousand cases in profane history; a heroic individual taking the lead in the assertion of his country's liberties, but goaded on in his daring career by the impulse of private resentments, and so having his patriotism laid open, on the part of his enemies, to the suspicion of impure and selfish motives. Is it not our want of inspiration alone, that prevents us from discovering the precise designs of God in modern times, even while their accomplishment is still in progress? and is it not the deficiency of our faith alone that, after the issue, prevents us from discovering the presence and controlling power of God through and over the capricious feelings and complicated affairs of mortals?

The other circumstance is the desultory and trifling character (trifling in respect of its visible means and operations, not of its results, which were miraculous) of the contest in which Samson had engaged. The whole of the Israelites were enslaved, why, then, did he not first endeavour to rally them around their country's standard? Where was the likelihood that a single individual, however dauntless in bravery and gigantic in strength, should ever be able to cope with or to conquer a whole nation, especially when he entered on the undertaking by mischievously burning their crops, and so bringing upon himself personally a whole swarm of exasperated enemies? All such inquiries are at once answered by a reference to the will of God, who had so decreed. But his decree in the case may also be shown to have been perfectly adapted to the condition of the people of Israel. They were tamed by the oppression which they had so long endured; they were enfeebled in all the nobler attributes of manhood, by the dissolute practices connected with the idolatry into which they had relapsed; they were, in short, sunk in the miserable and helpless weakness of those who knew that they had forsaken their God, while yet they had no inclination to return to his service. And thus they were the heartless and willing slaves of the Philistines, far readier to betray their deliverer than to follow him in struggling for the freedom of their country. The whole of Samson's achievements were fitted to rouse them from this wretched lethargy, and to inspire them with that confidence in God which is the source of all true courage. His efforts were of incalculable value, not so much on account of their own immediate results, as for their moral effect on the minds of his countrymen.

PRAYER.

Evermore, O God, hast thou made the outgoing of morning to rejoice before us. Day follows day into darkness, and night after night, each teaching its proper lesson, passes away for ever, while we are left, preserved by thee, for purposes to be fully unfolded in eternity. O most merciful God, prepare us by thy grace for the fulfilment of these purposes. And grant that in this fleeting succession of time and events, we may be brought so to remember our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom. How much, O our Father, have we to thank thee for. Many are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward, they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee; if we would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. No more indeed may we look for miracles to bring us light and deliverance. A finished record of revelation, which thou hast mercifully granted us, is our pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, a light to our feet and a lamp to our path; the sword of the Spirit, to defend us from our spiritual enemies, and the instrument of bloodless conquests, to establish peace and good-will throughout the world. May thy kingdom come, when thy word shall be man's only and universal law. We thank thee, O Lord, for the wise and benevolent arrangements of thy providence. It is not for us to pierce the mystery in which its processes are involved. But there is no element at work in it which is unknown to thee, or beyond thy control. Thine own Spirit, which moved on the void and formless confusion of a newly created world, is still bringing order out of the most perplexed events; and thou art accomplishing thine own great and holy purposes, even by means of those agencies that seem the most turbulent and irregular. Thou stillest the noise of multitudes of waters, and the yet wilder passions that ferment in the tumults of the people. Thou makest the wrath of man to praise thee, and restrainest the remainder of his wrath. O enable us to set thee always before our eyes; to discern thee in all thy works and ways. Let thy Spirit, O God, go with us to the duties and occupations of this day. In the midst of its best enjoyments and busiest pursuits, may we still feel that this is not our rest, that here we have no continuing city. So may we use the world as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion thereof passeth away. May thy grace prevent us from setting our hearts on temporal things. May our conversation be without covetousness; may it be as becometh the gospel. Seeking growth in grace, and increase

in the knowledge of divine things, may we advance daily in meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. .Preserve us, O gracious Father, throughout this day from accident, and danger, and sudden death. Enable us to guard against the snares of the tempter, and to flee from every appearance of evil. And if thou shalt see fit to spare us till evening shall once more bring us rest, may we all meet again in peace, to bow ourselves before thee. To thee, and to thy fatherly protection and love we commend ourselves, soul and body together. Never leave us, never forsake us. We are poor and needy; in thee only is our help found. Hear us in heaven, thy dwelling-place, and when thou hearest, answer and forgive, for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXV. 4—7.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XXIII. 1—26.

REMARKS.

How iniquitous the scene in the court of Pilate. The falsehood and hypocrisy of our Lord's Jewish accusers, their pretended loyalty and patriotism, the easily assumed mask of the selfish and unprincipled, their cruelty, malignity, and hatred, and the perjury by which they hoped to gratify it. How fearful their blasphemy against the Spirit of God, in rejecting his testimony; how wicked and contemptible the whole character and conduct of Pilate, who, to shelter his own tyranny and misrule from exposure and punishment, was ready to surrender the innocent to death. We may notice, that it is remarkable that none of the rest of the evangelists notices the share which Herod had in the trial of our Lord. This person was tetrarch of Galilee, (iii. 1.) And when Pilate found that Jesus, being a Galilean, belonged to his jurisdiction, he sent him immediately to Herod, who was then at Jerusalem. Now, Herod was a man of the very basest character, the same who had murdered John the Baptist; and the son of that Herod who 'slew all the children that were in Bethlehem. (Mat. ii. 16.) Formerly, when he was told of Christ's miracles, his guilty conscience took the alarm, and he said, (Mat. xiv. 2.) 'This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.' Time, however, had probably cured him of this superstitious apprehension; for 'when he now saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad,' having long been desirous to see him, 'because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.' Accordingly, 'he questioned with him in many words.' Still, our Lord, destitute alike of ostentation and resentment, had neither a miracle to gratify the curiosity, nor a pungent word to rebuke the vices of the hardened sinner. The

gifts of the Holy Ghost were not to be turned into a show, like the tricks of the magician; so that though Herod questioned much, Jesus answered him nothing. The tetrarch, in the same spirit of savage levity in which he had murdered John, now in mockery arrayed Christ in royal robes, and sent him back to Pilate. 'And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together, for before they were at enmity.' Among wicked men, there never can be the union of genuine love. The objects of all being selfish, they may move together in masses, but cannot be vitally attached. Nevertheless, God has wisely provided that society shall subsist in some sort, even where wickedness most abounds. Community of interest, of taste, of habit, of pursuit, draws men together; and the example of Pilate and Herod teaches, that where all these are wanting, their place may be supplied by community of hatred; for here 'the rulers took council together against the Lord, and against his Anointed.' (Psal. ii. 2; Acts iv. 25—27.) And the instance is not a solitary one; a common enmity to the church has reconciled many enemies, and the ranks of persecutors have always been made up of singularly ill-assorted elements. Barabbas, who, 'for sedition and murder, was cast into prison,' became, through the operation of precisely such a union, the sudden favourite of the proud pharisees, who ordinarily would have spurned him from them, disdaining to pronounce his name. When Pilate said, 'I will chastise Jesus, and release him,' their instant reply was, 'away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.' Such, accordingly, was the issue—the Saviour to the cross—the seditious murderer to life and liberty.

PRAYER.

It is good, O most high God, to give thanks unto thee, and to sing praises unto thy name; to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night. Teach us how to thank thee for thy merciful preservation of us during another day. And now, when night and silence are inviting us to repose, may our souls seek and find rest under the shadow of thy wings. As we recal and reflect on the occurrences of the day, may we be enabled to trace thy goodness through them all; or should they be marked by some dark dispensations—for thy thoughts are very deep—may we still adore and trust, when we cannot comprehend. We thank thee, O Lord, for our social capacities and enjoyments, from which we derive so many important benefits and consolations. Thou hast written the law of love in the parent's heart, so preparing the gentlest protection for the helplessness of childhood. Thou hast taught the attachments of the child who knows it not, to cling around the parent. O may thy blessing rest on our family affections; may they be hallowed, and strengthened by the more endearing bonds of a common faith in thy Son, and a common hope of heaven. Enable us to exercise

them under a constant sense of our responsibility to thee. They are the gifts of thy fatherly love to us. May we employ them in provoking one another unto love, and to good works. And we bless thee, O Lord, that thou hast given us, in the gospel, a still richer display of thy love than any thing in nature affords. Thou hast commended thy love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We thank thee that thou hast thus brought life and immortality to light, opening up a new and living way of access for sinners to thyself. May we all, as conscience-stricken transgressors, be brought to lay hold of the hope set before us in the gospel, that being justified by the blood of Jesus, we may also be saved from wrath through him. So may we know and believe the love that thou hast to us. And in so far, O God, as we have already been brought to the knowledge of the truth, do thou, by thy grace, carry us on toward perfection. May we grow in practical holiness, in spirituality of mind, and in relish for those sacred exercises that bring us into thy presence. So may we attain unto the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, and to the full assurance of hope, gifts which are imparted by the Spirit, as the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. We implore thy protection throughout the night. Bless us, O God, with rest, and in our rest. So long as thou shalt see fit to spare us, grant us health of body, and soundness of mind; or if thou shalt see that we need thy fatherly chastisements, O remember that we are dust, and lay thy hand gently upon us; and grant us the gifts of thy grace, that we may be patient under every trial, striving, by committing our case to thee, to turn our afflictions into blessings. Unto thee we commend ourselves for time and for eternity. The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord cause his face to shine upon and be gracious unto us; the Lord lift upon us the light of his countenance and give us peace. Hear, O God, and answer, and accept; for all that we ask, is for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRaise—Psalm xxviii. 5—8.

Scripture—Judges xvi.

REMARKS.

The narrative contained in this chapter is full of instruction. The lust of the flesh is one of the evils which we are most urgently warned against in the New Testament. It is an evil to which we are

very liable, and it is most destructive in its effects. Very great and very good men have been sometimes made the slaves of sensual passion, and are held up to us as examples, that we may be taught by their fate to avoid the like crimes. This is eminently the case with Samson, who, for a time, seems to have been entirely given up to sensual gratifications. We cannot help being struck with the remarkable change which his indulgence in lust produced upon his whole character. Not only was his moral purity thereby destroyed, but his understanding seems to have entirely left him. It has been said, 'surely in vain is the snare spread in the sight of any bird;' but the conduct of Samson contradicts the proverb. For though he was warned of the design of Delilah, he did not free himself from her snare, but suffered himself to be enticed to his ruin. Such will generally be the case with those who place themselves in similar circumstances. Though they may know and feel that they are sacrificing health and worldly substance, and the well-being of their immortal souls, they cannot free themselves from the dominion of their lust. They are, as it were, under the influence of a charm, and as it is told of the bird, when fascinated by the serpent's eye, they will drop into the serpent's mouth. 'The lips of a strange woman drop as an honey comb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house; lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel.' The way of safety is to avoid the very beginnings of this evil, for no one can tell to what it may lead. Let us then 'make a covenant with our eyes,' remembering that in the spirit of the holy law of God, 'he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' We may also learn from this chapter, that the connections and friendships we form in life, ought to be based upon religion. Whatever love or regard a wicked person may profess, or actually entertain for us, we may be assured that it can only terminate in evil. If we suffer our affections to rest on an unworthy object, and indulge in much intercourse with such a person, we are sure to be sufferers. Our hearts insensibly begin to make apologies for guilt, and to regard it with less abhorrence, and in the end it obtains our entire sympathy and we become as much 'the child of hell,' as our companion. The narrative we have read, contains also an animating lesson of encouragement. Samson prayed to God in the midst of his calamity, and his prayer was heard and answered. So in our deeper abasement and guilt, if in earnestness of heart we cry unto God, we are encouraged to believe, that through his abundant grace in Christ Jesus he will hear our cry, and deliver us from the horrible pit, and the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock.

PRAYER.

O God, we acknowledge our unworthiness even to lift up our eyes to the place where thine honour dwelleth. Thou hast said, that the man who shall ascend into thy holy hill, is he who

of clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. But we are altogether laden with iniquity. Our hands are not clean, neither is our heart pure. Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; we are a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters. Our own hearts condemn us because of our wickedness, and how much more thou who art greater than our hearts, and who canst not look on iniquity without abhorrence. It becometh us to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, and to cry, Unclean, unclean. Thou hast commanded us to love thee with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind; yet thou hast often not been in all our thoughts, and we have given those affections to the creature which thou claimest for thyself. We confess that the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, have too often had dominion over us. We magnify thy name, O Lord, that thou hast encouraged us to cry unto thee, Be merciful to us for we are sinners. Thou hast invited the weary and heavy laden to come to thee, that they may find rest. Thou hast, of thy free grace, contrived a way whereby we may be redeemed from all iniquity, and purified unto thee a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Grant unto us, O Lord, this great deliverance. Turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto thee, that we may receive the forgiveness of our sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified through the faith that is in Christ Jesus. For his sake receive us graciously, and love us freely. Heal all our backslidings, and remember us ever with that favour which thou bearest unto thine own. Let not sin have dominion over us any more. Thou alone hast power to effect our deliverance, and we pray that in this, the house of our bondage, thou wouldst compass us round with the song of victory. We rejoice in thy declaration, that if any man sin, he hath an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ, the righteous. May he be our advocate and propitiation, that we may be delivered from the curse of thy violated law, and become sharers in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. We pray for thy guidance and protection this day. Do thou give us strength to discharge the duties to which, in the course of thy providence, we may be called. Keep our feet from falling, and our eyes from tears. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLIV.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XXIII. 27—56.

REMARKS.

We have here an account of the greatest and most wonderful event which history has recorded. It opens with the voice of lamentation, as if to teach us to mourn and be in bitterness. The heart can scarcely fail to be affected by the narrative of such cruel sufferings as Christ was called upon to endure. But the lesson is to us, as well as to the Jewish women, 'weep not for me, but weep for yourselves.' It was our sins which caused all these sufferings. 'Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.' And while it is true that only by looking to the cross of Christ can the sinner obtain peace and comfort, it is also true that no spectacle is so well fitted to overwhelm us with grief. We do not understand or feel aright the purpose of Christ's death, if, on contemplating it, we are not filled with the liveliest sorrow because of sin. But there were many who witnessed that amazing spectacle whose hearts were hardened in unbelief, and whose mouths were filled with mockery. It is so still. How few of us are affected by the sight of Jesus on the cross as we ought to be! With what indifference are his sufferings contemplated! What mockery do we throw upon his gracious work, when we continue in our sins, and refuse to flee for refuge to the only hope set before us! The Jews, in derision, inscribed over the cross, 'This is the king of the Jews;' and are we not guilty of the same contempt, if we say unto Christ, Lord, Lord, while we do not those things which he commands us. Christ, even in the hour and power of darkness, showed that he was able to save to the very uttermost all who come to God through him. The malefactor prayed to be remembered by him, and acknowledged him as Lord, and his prayer was heard. What a lesson of joyful encouragement is here to despairing sinners! What a demonstration of the omnipotence of the grace of God! The invitations of the gospel are unto all. Whosoever will, let him drink of the waters of life freely. God's greatest gift was his Son, and this gift was bestowed upon hell-deserving sinners. Shall he not with him, then, freely give us all things? There is no room for despair. But neither is there room for presumption to him who would sin, because the grace of God abounds. As has been remarked, there was one thus saved, that the greatest sinner might not despair, and there was but one, that none might presume. How unbounded and untiring is the love which Christ here exemplifies! In the midst of his severest agonies, and surrounded with universal mockery, he prays for his tormentors. And what a lesson of gentleness and charity is hereby conveyed to us. 'I say unto you, Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.' The veil of the temple was rent when Jesus died, to indicate to us that the way of access into the holiest was now open. By one offering Christ for ever perfected all them

that are sanctified. Nothing now stands between us and the God of our salvation. Neither his justice nor his holiness forbid the approach of the vilest sinner, for in the sacrifice of Christ mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other. But the way is Christ; and God can only regard us with complacency when he regards us in the face of his Anointed.

PRAYER.

Our heavenly Father, we praise and bless thee that thou hast so loved the world as to give thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life. We rejoice in believing that there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. We rejoice in the perfect sufficiency of that atonement which has been offered for sin. In thee, O God, was our help found. From thee the word went forth, Save from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom. Thou didst stretch forth thy hand to raise us up from the horrible pit and the miry clay, and to set our feet upon a rock. When the fulness of time had come, thou didst send forth thy Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them who were under the law, and that we through him might receive the adoption of sons. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us! Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, though, peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die; but herein thou hast commended thy love unto us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. O God, give us more and more to feel the need we have of a Saviour, and to perceive the exceeding sinfulness of sin. We have nothing acceptable to render unto thee. Enable us then to present the sacrifice of humble and contrite hearts, which thou wilt not despise. May Christ be made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Our prayer is, that we may be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith. O Lord, we lament that we have so little regarded him who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. Teach us, we pray thee, to hate sin and to flee from it. Regarding it as the cause of all our Lord's sufferings, may we be taught to mourn over it with that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of. Seeing, by our confession of Christ, we are no longer our own, but bought with a price, may we constantly and earnestly seek to

glorify thee in our souls and bodies, which are thine. And do thou grant unto us that, being delivered from the power of all our spiritual enemies, we may henceforth be enabled to serve thee without fear, in holiness and righteousness, before thee all the days of our lives. Forgive, we beseech thee, the sins of which we have this day been guilty in thy sight. Be with us during the silent watches of the night. Thou who keepest Israel slumberest not nor sleepest. Give us refreshing sleep, and let no plague come nigh our dwelling. If thou sparest us till another day, grant that we may awake in health and strength, with minds disposed to love and to serve thee, for all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM IV. 1—5.

SCRIPTURE—JUDGES XVII.

REMARKS.

The evil passions of the heart acquire strength with increasing years. This is especially true of the lust for money. Avarice is emphatically the vice of the aged. We have here an affecting instance of its power to overcome the natural affection of a mother for her son. She cursed him because of the money she had lost. Such is the fruit of this vice. It contracts and debases all the natural affections of the heart, and engrosses the whole soul. It will suffer no rival, and in its lordly ascendancy tramples upon all the kindly and charitable feelings which adorn the mind. Like every other vice, it grows by excesses, and is to be guarded against and checked in its beginnings, if we wish to avoid its absolute dominion. Money is said to be the root of all evil, and certainly the love of it has been, in every age, the fruitful cause of family dissensions. The case of Micah and his mother, is one which we see often exemplified. The nearest relations curse and bless one another, every day, according as they receive or are deprived of this idol. We are here presented with a very curious and instructive example of the way in which the affections endeavour to pacify the conscience, so that while we indulge in sin, we may please ourselves with the imagination that all is well with us. No sooner was the money restored to Micah's mother, than she devoted a considerable portion of it to the purposes of idolatry, and the family eagerly availed themselves of the opportunity to obtain a priest for their household. The heart cannot rest satisfied with an utter abandonment of all form of religion, and it feels a gratification in cherishing its corruptions. It is thus that, in the history of the world, false religion has obtained the widest sway, and there is a constant tendency to leave the form of sound words which has been delivered to us. Thus we may be convinced of the need there

is earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, seeing we have within ourselves such powerful enemies to that faith. But there seems to be a general principle embodied in the latter part of the narrative, to which it is of importance to attend. It is this, that men are led eagerly to adopt some form of religion, and to satisfy themselves with the mere form. This is an error which may be practised among us, as well as among idolaters. Micah was highly satisfied because he had got a Levite in his house. And how often does it happen among the professing disciples of Jesus, that they are satisfied with mere external observances. They have sabbath ordinances, a church, and a minister, and a form of worship. And these, with them, constitute religion. They say with Micah, 'Now I know that the Lord will do me good,' and this merely because they are in the enjoyment of Christian privileges. It becomes us constantly to watch over our deceitful hearts, lest we should be hearers of the word only, and not doers of the same. And if, with the ancient church, and in the spirit of Micah, we are disposed at any time to say, 'I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing,' we may be certain that at that very time we are 'poor, and miserable, and destitute, and blind, and naked.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, we bless thee that thou hast revealed thyself as the hearer and the answerer of prayer, and hast invited all flesh to come unto thee, that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. Help us to draw near unto thee, at this time, with true hearts and with faith unfeigned, believing that thou art, and that thou art the rewarder of all them that diligently seek thee. Raise our affections to the things which are above. Reveal to our consciences and hearts the realities of faith, that we may no longer be engrossed by the perishing objects of time, but may be led earnestly to seek that portion which shall never be taken away from us. Our hearts are deceitful above all things, O Lord, and desperately wicked. Do thou search and try us, and see if there be in us any wicked way, and lead us in the way everlasting. Suffer us not to be led captive by our own evil inclinations. Restore unto us the joy of thy salvation, and uphold us by thy free Spirit. Guide our feet into the way of peace, and restrain them from that path wherein destroyers go. We praise thee for the spiritual privileges thou hast conferred upon us. Thou hast given us thy word to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Thou hast given us line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. At sundry times and in divers manners thou didst speak unto the fathers by the prophets, but in these last days thou hast spoken unto us by thy Son, and caused the light of thy truth to shine so clearly around us, that he who runneth may read.

O God, impress upon our hearts a deep sense of our responsibility to thee for the use of all the privileges thou hast conferred upon us. May we ever remember, that to whom much is given of them also much shall be required, that if they escaped not who refused to hear him who spake to them on earth, much less shall we escape if we refuse to hear him who now speaketh to us from heaven. O let thy word have free course and be glorified in the midst of us. Bring its truths home to our hearts with the spirit of demonstration and with power. Let thy Spirit take up his indwelling in us, causing us both to will and to do of thy good pleasure. Remove the darkness from our understandings that we may clearly know the truth, and take away the hardness of our hearts, that we may run in the way of thy commandments. From thee, O Lord, cometh down every good and perfect gift, and with grateful hearts we acknowledge all the bounties of thy providence, the mercies of the past night and of this new day. Keep us in thy fear, and sustain us by thy power all the days of our appointed time upon the earth, and receive us at last into thine everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—HYMN IV.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XXIV. 1—35.

REMARKS.

It seemed as if by the death of Christ, hope itself was extinguished. He who had showed such power, who had wrought so many miracles, who had bid death resign his dominion over others, had bowed his own head and given up the ghost. All the fair promises he had given seemed to be belied. He was laid in the grave as other men are, and no power was known which could redeem him from its corruption. But the darkness of the night of despair, and utter hopelessness, was broken by a glorious morning. He was sought for among the dead, but he was not there; he had risen again, and thereby gave us the assurance that his work was finished. The battle had been fought, and the victory was won. The dominion of death was overthrown, the powers of darkness subdued; satan's head was bruised by the seed of the woman; life and immortality were brought to light; and it was proved that neither death, nor earth, nor hell, were able to subdue the Son of God. The resurrection of Christ is the most glorious, the most consoling truth in the whole Bible. It lies at the foundation of all the rest, and establishes them all. It is our stay and hope, for if he be not risen, our faith is vain. But by his resurrection he demonstrated his power to save, as by

his obedience to the death he showed his infinite willingness to save. All the enemies of our eternal well-being, as they had conspired to slay him, were all combined to hold him in the tomb. When he came forth of the grave, he showed to man that all enemies were put under his feet, and that he was able to save to the very uttermost. He showed that the justice of God was satisfied, and had no farther claim upon the believing sinner. He was raised again for our justification. It was now that the angelic song met its fulfilment, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' The way of reconciliation was now open. Death was vanquished, sin was trodden under foot. He triumphed over principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly. The glad light of immortality now shone upon those who sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death; and man can now say, 'O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ has risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.' Therefore were such pains taken to establish this grand fundamental doctrine. It was confirmed by evidence stronger than any other fact. There were various witnesses of it, who had seen Jesus at various times, and under great diversities of circumstance. They were convinced of it against their own previous belief, and maintained it at the constant hazard of their lives. Not one of them would receive it on report; they had all to witness for themselves. They would not believe the woman; they refused to credit Peter; they yielded not to the strongest testimony, and it was because they were eye witnesses of the fact, that they finally assented to its truth. Now, however, it comes to us on evidence which cannot be resisted without the deepest guilt, and which will not be resisted without the strongest prejudice. Let us give our joyful assent to this glorious truth, and endeavour to show our practical belief in it, by seeking to be made like unto Christ. He has risen to glory, and in holiness, and it is in vain we shall expect to see his face in joy, if we be not raised to newness of life.

PRAYER.

We give glory unto thee, O Lord, that he who was delivered for our offences, hath been raised again for our justification. Our souls would magnify the Lord, and our spirits would rejoice in God our Saviour, who hath regarded us in our low estate, and with his arm hath brought us salvation. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all our iniquities, who healeth all our diseases, who redeemeth our life from destruction, and crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercies. Glory be to God in the highest, that peace hath been proclaimed on the earth, and good-will to the fallen children of men. We rejoice to know that Christ hath

finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness; that he hath been raised as the first fruits of them that slept, and that he will bring many sons unto glory. We rejoice that he hath been made head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all, that he hath spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, and is now possessed of all power and authority over all things. We rejoice that in him we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted like as we are; who in his exaltation is able to sympathise with us in all our afflictions and temptations, and to send us that relief and consolation of which we stand in need. O satisfy our souls with thy goodness. Out of the fulness that is in Christ, bestow upon us even grace for grace. Renew us in the spirit of our minds, and as thou hast set before us the hope of glory, give us a meetness for the inheritance of thy saints. Make thy way known, O Lord, upon the earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, Lord, let all the people praise thee. Behold how many nations are yet sitting in the region and shadow of death. Cause the light of the glorious gospel to shine upon them, and give them peace. Establish and extend, we pray thee, the dominion of the Lord Jesus; and where his name is already known, grant that his doctrine may be adorned by the lives and conversations of those who profess it. We commit ourselves to thy care and keeping this night. Watch over us, and give us quiet rest. We come to that fountain which hath been opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness, that we may be washed therein, and purified from all our pollutions. Lord, make us clean every whit. And to thee, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, we would ascribe all glory, now and for ever. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXV. 12—14.

SCRIPTURE—I SAMUEL I.

REMARKS.

In this chapter, the inspired writer introduces us to a family scene, and details to us part of the domestic history of Elkanah, and Hannah his spouse. Elkanah, a levite, had married two wives, a practice at that time suffered because of the hardness of men's hearts, but what was an infringement of the

original marriage law; a law, wise and holy, which is never infringed, without bringing on the violators more or less of personal and domestic unhappiness; and such the inspired narrative informs us, proved to be the experience of Elkanah. One of his wives was named Peninnah, she was the mother of several children; and, as Hannah was childless, Peninnah took advantage of this to annoy her rival; and that, even when the family was engaged in the discharge of religious duties; 'when the time was that Elkanah offered;'—when they went up to the house of the Lord. Is not the temper of Peninnah that of those among ourselves, who make the sabbath, the sacrament, the church, occasions of the vain-glorious display of dress, ornament, or personal appearance? Do we not imitate her as often as we endeavour to triumph over others, by the ostentatious exhibition of advantages of which they are destitute? These provocations on the part of her adversary, appear to have affected Hannah more deeply than we can consider proper; 'she wept and did not eat; she was in bitterness of soul, and wept sore,' thus placing it in her adversary's power to triumph over her. The believer must not permit any inferiority in regard to temporal possessions so deeply to perturb him; but in resignation, in prayer, in grateful, adoring communion with his reconciled Father, should seek an habitual contentment and serenity of mind. To every bereft mother, especially, who has lost a child, and who is sorrowing over that child's grave, too deeply and too long, the God of Sarah, and Ruth, and Hannah, does in effect say: 'Why weepest thou, and why eatest thou not, and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?' But if Hannah erred in yielding to excess of grief for the want of children, she acted rightly in unbosoming her cares and desires to Him who delights in upholding and comforting his children. But must we not confess, that we too frequently allow ourselves to be discomposed by such mere trifles, as we would blush to mention in prayer; or if we did, it could only be in shame and confusion of face at our sinful weakness, and to implore from God a better, firmer, calmer temper? We find that Hannah's prayer was the voiceless prayer of the heart. 'Now Hannah she spake in her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard:' a passage invaluable; as teaching us that we may, and ought to commune with our heavenly Father, even in the crowd and bustle of life: that prayer needs not the aid of words: and that the matron, amidst her domestic toils; the weaver at his loom; the ploughman in the field, the seaman on the giddy mast, may have sweet and heartfelt intercourse with God in Christ. Then let us mark the virtuous horror with which Hannah defended herself from the accusation of being drunken. To see the father of a family drunken, is an afflicting sight: nothing is more hideous than to behold a wife or a mother of a family intoxicated. In answer to Hannah's supplications, God gave her a son, whom she named 'Asked of God,' for so the name Samuel signifies; and this child she dedicated to the Lord, as a levite, and as a Nazarite, such as Samson was, his hair being unshorn. Let parents consider their children as

not so much theirs, as God's; let them early teach them to lisp in prayer; nay, more, they owe this duty to the church, to set apart the ablest and most amiable of their sons, to serve the Lord in the holy ministry.

PRAYER.

O Lord God Almighty, our Father, author of every good and perfect gift, hearer and answerer of prayer, Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, do thou this morning permit us, sinful and all unworthy though we be, to draw near to thee as thou art in Christ, a reconciled Father, who can now be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly; and who dost, in thy Son, give us a free and ready access at all times, to a throne of grace. We come before thee, God of our fathers, holy and merciful Jehovah, not on the ground of any claim or merit of our own; we come as the lost, the undone, the polluted, the rebellious; in the prevailing name of that great advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, whose intercessions thou hearest always; and we implore thee, for his sake alone, to give to us the true spirit of prayer, a personal interest in his atoning death, and a personal likeness to his character. We rejoice that our Lord and Saviour hath brought life and immortality to light in the gospel; that types and shadows have passed away; that the Redeemer has come to teach us, to die for us, to reign in and over us; that we live in the noon-day of gospel light; and that now we need not to journey to a distant Shiloh to worship thee, but that every believing and prayerful family is to thee, the Almighty God, a Shiloh, tabernacle, and home. O grant, we pray thee, heavenly Father, that we may duly lay to heart and be improved by the passage of scripture now read by us; and in all our anxieties, may we habitually seek unto thee, as our comforter, our strength, our satisfying portion. Do thou, as our guide and protector, go with us this day, when we engage in whatever employments lie before us, giving us the right spirit of our station; protecting us, if it be thy will, from dangers, diseases, and death; enabling us to overcome temptation, and to walk closely with thee, our God, in whom we trust, in whom we rejoice. Thou hast mercifully watched over us during the night—thou hast caused us to experience of thy morning bounties; O teach us how to serve thee this day, and to live as though we knew it were to be our last. Hear us, O Lord God of hosts; forgive us, and accept us, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXVIII. 7—9.

SCRIPTURE—LUKE XXIV. 36—53.

REMARKS.

In the commencement of this passage of holy writ, we read that the two disciples who had gone to Emmaus, a village about seven miles and a half north-west of Jerusalem, returned immediately on their Lord's manifesting himself to them, in order that their brethren might share with them in the joy they felt on account of the resurrection of the Lord; and to this day, every believer rejoicing in Christ as his victorious king, delights in communicating the heavenly transport to others; so social and benevolent is the spirit of faith. While the disciples are eagerly discoursing of the alleged resurrection, behold, of a sudden, their Master is with them; as he still is, with every little party of his sincere followers. He was not silent when he came, and what can more interest us than to mark what the style is of his first salutation. It often happens in the world, when a friend, who was one with us in humble or adverse days, rises to an eminence above us, that he forgets or speaks haughtily to his former associates. Since the disciples last saw their Lord, he had risen from suffering to victory; and that a victory to glory in, over no mean enemies, death and the grave. Has Jesus then, the triumphant, ceased to be as gentle and loving as Jesus the sufferer? How consoling to find that his salutation is: 'Peace be unto you.' Let us rejoice that Jesus in glory has as tender a sympathy with the frail and humble, as Jesus the persecuted and the homeless. The Saviour further manifests his interest in his friends, by being at pains to give them full proof that it was indeed the very Jesus whom they had seen on the cross, who was with them. He gave them five proofs of his identity, and bodily presence: 1. They saw his body; 2. They heard him speak; 3. They touched him; 4. They examined the marks of his crucifixion; 5. They saw him eat. He besides referred them to the great argument for his Messiahship that is contained in the types and prophecies, which were embodied in the Mosaic ritual, in the history of the typical personages among the Jews, such as David; and which were scattered through the Old Testament; for instance, the paschal lamb was a type of Christ; and in the xxii. Psalm, and the liii. chapter of Isaiah, are very minute predictions of his sufferings and character. Indeed, to understand the Old Testament, it is necessary to remember, that our Lord is the great Jehovah, Jesus; the leading object of the Old Testament. The Redeemer then announces, that repentance, and the remission of sin, were to be the two principal themes of gospel-preaching. To depend singly on the atoning sacrifice of Christ for a full and free pardon; and to repent of, and forsake those sins which nailed the Redeemer to the cross; are two great doctrines of the gospel, and what mission more sublime than that here given to the apostles, was ever intrusted to man? Their field was the world; they were to subdue all nations under the dominion of the Prince of peace, and be the

founders of a universal monarchy of truth, holiness, and love. To effect an end so great, they themselves had no power; they were to tarry in Jerusalem till the Holy Ghost should come upon them, qualifying them to bear all afflictions, to win all victories. These instructions delivered to his disciples, the Redeemer, after spending forty days with them, at last, from Bethany, ascended into heaven; his last act on earth being the act of benediction. He is now at the right hand of power. To intercede and to bless, is still his favourite work. Knowing that we have a great friend and brother in heaven, of such a character, and in pursuit of such designs, let us, like the disciples, continually praise and bless God, in the church, in our lives, and in our families.

PRAYER.

O God, thou art our God, we will seek thee in faith and prayer; we will come to thee by that new and living way which thou hast opened and consecrated for us to walk in, making mention of the righteousness of Christ, and of his only, and rejoicing that the stone has been rolled away from the door of the sepulchre, and that Christ has risen a conqueror, and more than a conqueror. We praise and adore thee, almighty and most gracious Father, that, in our low and lost estate, thou hast cared for us, and hast given us thine own well-beloved Son, who has undertaken for us, and stood, in our room and stead, the great propitiatory sacrifice—the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. To him, our Beloved, will we betake ourselves in all our distresses, until the day-break and the shadows flee away; and we implore thee, heavenly Father, to enable us, with the feeling of the apostle, to say, We are crucified with Christ, nevertheless we live; yet, not we, but Christ liveth in us, and the life which we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us. We rejoice in Jesus as a prince and deliverer, to rule over and defend his people by his sceptre; as a priest, to intercede for them; as a shepherd, to guide them. Our glorying is this, that when he ascended on high, he left behind him his peace—the peace that passeth understanding, as the inheritance of those who love his name, and are waiting for his appearing, when he shall come the second time in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels, to separate for ever between the clean and the unclean, and to take his flock to himself, to feed them in the green pastures of heaven, and beside the still waters that are there. We desire, O Lord, to give thee thanks for bringing us to the close of another day of our lives. Thou hast supplied our returning wants, and showered thy liberal blessings upon us. We thank thee for all the temporal mercies of the week. With a still more

fervent gratitude, we thank thee for the spiritual advantages with which, during the week, we have been favoured: the many blessed opportunities of secret and family prayer, of reading the scriptures, of communing with thee in our hearts, and of practically obeying those laws of thine which are not grievous, but have so strong a tendency to confer health, contentment, and prosperity. We now implore thee, O Lord, to be preparing us for the solemnities of the coming sabbath. We would bear in mind, that this is the preparation, the day before the sabbath. Protect us during the night; bring us, if it please thee, to the light of another day of the Son of man; and grant to us and ours, thy presence and blessing at all times, and all we ask, is for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EIGHTEENTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LV. 16—18.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LV.

REMARKS.

This psalm has evidently a double application—to David the type, and to Christ Jesus, the second and greater David, who is the antitype. It is understood to have been written by David, at the time when the treachery of Ahithophel, and the unnatural rebellion of his son Absalom, had involved him in the greatest dangers; but when he had faith given him to compose a psalm such as this, we may say, that all his foes were already discomfited, and that his soul was already delivered in peace from the battle that was against him. And when any of us can feel the sentiments of this psalm, and can in truth exclaim, 'as for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me;' we may be certain that that man has in effect already conquered, and that to him the gates of the Jerusalem above have already been thrown open. From the first to the eighth verse, inclusive, the psalmist bewails his afflictions; and in verses 12—14, 20, 21. Ahithophel is spoken of. But we cannot adequately appreciate this psalm unless we hear, in these inspired words, the mournful voice of our Saviour, who was the man of sorrows, the chief of sufferers. It is this circumstance—that the Messiah here speaks, that imparts to this sacred ode so deep and mysterious a meaning and interest. And let us, in our calamities, apply to God for aid and deliverance; let us betake ourselves to the bosom of Jesus, and hasten our escape to him, from the stormy wind and tempest, for he is a hiding-place and a covert. David was betrayed by Ahithophel—Christ, by Judas; let not those who have been at the table of the Lord forget, that to indulge in sin after having gone forward to the sacrament of the supper, is to imitate these

two traitors, as their conduct is described here, and in psalm xli. 9; and is to betray the Lord, after eating bread with him.

In the 9th verse, David prays the Lord to destroy and divide the tongues of his enemies; and in 2 Sam. xv. 31. we find him praying thus: 'O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness,' which prayer the Lord fully answered. Then in the 15th verse, we meet with a solemn and awful imprecation of God's wrath on the psalmist's enemies; but only in so far as they were the enemies of God. In this imprecation, the fate of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, seems referred to, as detailed in Num. xvi. Or, if we prefer it, we may read these words as a prophecy, in the manner of verses 19th and 23d; a prediction accomplished in the miserable ruin of Ahithophel, Absalom, and their party; in the self-murder of Judas, and in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Alas, this verse will also be fulfilled in the everlasting ruins of all who reject the gospel offer. 'Death shall seize upon them, and they shall go down quick into hell.'

David further expresses in this psalm the utmost confidence in the right hand of him who abideth of old; a confidence which they alone can possess who have at least, as David and Daniel had, their three seasons of prayer daily. To pray statedly to God, for a few minutes, 'at noon,' each day, would have the happiest effects on our temper and behaviour; would invigorate us to encounter the difficulties of life, and would sanctify our prosperous and our social hours.

In conclusion, mark the contrast between the opening and the close of this psalm. It begins with sorrow; it closes with trust and joy. Such is the power of faith, such the advantages of prayerful intercourse with God. He draws near to his people, till their hearts, even in the seasons of calamity, glow with his presence.

PRAYER.

Lord God Almighty, who didst of thine infinite grace, and in thy great wisdom, devise a plan of deliverance for us, rebellious and iniquitous creatures; most holy, most merciful Father! do thou permit us, on this the blessed morning of our Lord's resurrection from the dead, to draw near to thee, in adoring gratitude, and with songs of Hosanna on our lips. The glad sound is in our ears, Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely; that full and free offer we would gladly embrace; and as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so would our souls pant after thee, O God. We were lying in our blood; we were brands already in the burning; we were exposed, for ever, to all the fierceness of thy just indignation; we could do nothing to redeem our own souls, or to satisfy for our sins. Praise then, for evermore, to thy mercy and thy gentleness, which have made us

great; for the cross has been raised on Calvary, and on that cross the great atonement has been completed; death and sin have been vanquished; the head of the serpent has been bruised; an everlasting righteousness has been brought in; there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit; and in Him who died for us and rose again, we will evermore rejoice, and do implore thee to grant, that the sabbaths we enjoy on earth may prove to us all to be a foretaste of an unending sabbath-rest in the bosom of Jesus above. Heavenly Father, we thank thee for thy preservation of us through the night. May we be in the Spirit on this blessed day; may thy servant who is to address us in thy name, have power given him to deliver such a message as shall suit our case, edify us, and bring us to thee, with a subdued and child-like heart. May we this day, under the preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus, experience that the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. May many be converted; may thy people be built up in their most holy faith. Be with such as are prevented, by necessary causes, from waiting on thee in thy house of prayer; O do thou bless and comfort them, in what afflictions or occupations soever they may be, and cause them to experience that thou art not confined to houses made with hands, but that thou art ever present with the contrite and believing. And do thou, who art the God of the sabbath, beget in all hearts a deepening veneration for thine own day, and in a way of mercy, bring those who desecrate this day to honour it and thee, and to find safety in Him whose resurrection this day shows forth. And now, O Lord, do thou accept of, and answer, these our prayers, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LVI. 9—13.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS LVI. LVII.

REMARKS.

THE LVI. PSALM, one which believers have often felt to have been penned as if expressly for themselves in their trials and severe exercises of faith, is supposed to have been composed by David when in danger among the Philistines; but it is very applicable also to the state of the Lord Jesus Christ,

when beset by his persecutors, and to the condition of all believers, who cannot be too deeply aware that they live in an enemy's country, in a state of society in which many licentious opinions and many atrocious practices prevail, which are inimical to the progress of the kingdom of grace. But let us, like David, have constant recourse to God, and even though the fierce waters come in to our souls, all shall yet be well. The number and designs of the psalmist's enemies are described in verses 1, 2, 5, and 6. 'Every day,' he exclaims, 'they wrest my words.' Let us so speak as to prevent, as far as possible, all misrepresentation of our words. We give too slight attention to the duties of conversation, which is so important a means of good or of evil. In verse 8th, the allusion seems to be to a custom known also among the Greeks and Romans, of preserving the tears shed for a friend's death, in small phials, called lachrymatories. God forgets not the penitent's tears; he will remember that Mary Magdalene and Peter have wept; to him the tear of sincere repentance is, for Christ's sake, a pearl of great price. In verse 12. the psalmist acknowledges that the vows of God were upon him. All who have been baptized, or who have communicated, are, in a peculiar manner, under vows; it deeply concerns them that these be fulfilled. And when we desire, with the psalmist, to walk before God in the light of the living, or to enjoy prolonged life, let us desire this, only in conjunction with the prayer that our feet be kept from falling; and that grace be given us to serve our God, and to promote the cause of his Son.

THE LVII. PSALM is understood to have been composed upon David's escape from Saul, in the cave of Engedi, as narrated in 1 Sam. xxiv.; and it resembles the preceding psalm in giving a description of great sufferings and dangers; an utterance of an earnest desire to be heard of God; a confident trust in his power as engaged in the psalmist's defence; a strong desire to see God exalted even above the heavens; a prediction of utter ruin to befall the enemy; and an expression of a holy vow to praise the Lord, for his mercy and for his truth's sake. 'My soul is among lions,' he exclaims; to the attacks of him who, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour, the believer is continually exposed. And what can more stimulate us to seek our happiness in God, than the experience of the writer of this lovely song of Sion, who, in the midst of nets and snares, of spears, arrows, and sharp swords, yet enjoyed such triumphs of holy gladness; such undoubting anticipations of deliverance; such glowing desires that his God should be exalted; such unshaken firmness of heart. How desirable are such habits of soul! Would they not place us on a rock, against which, though the stormiest waves should break, at the worst it would be our feet only that would be wet by the spray. Let us live up to our privileges in this meridian fullness of gospel day; let us make no more sinful compliances with the world; let Jehoshaphat no longer make alliance with Ahab. 'Awake up, my glory.' Let us especially redeem our morning hours to prayer and bible reading; for if we were but more diligent in redeeming the time, and more frequent in our approaches to a throne of grace, we

would enjoy religion and duty far more intensely than we do; and ours would be a nobler, a happier, and a safer life.

PRAYER.

Lord God of our fathers, we would now close this holy, peaceful, and blessed day, which thou in thy great wisdom and mercy hast bestowed upon us, in thanksgiving to thee for the sabbath rest, and the sabbath instructions we have enjoyed; praying thee, that through faith in Christ, who as on this day rose from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep, we may attain to that better rest which remaineth for the people of God, when we shall walk before thee in the light of the living. We thank thee, gracious Father, for the gift of the holy scriptures, inspired of thee, which are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus; and we desire to feel how great is our responsibility, living as we do under the clear shining of a light so glorious. In God we will praise his word; in the Lord we will praise his word. Do thou enable us to discharge all the vows, and to fulfil all the resolutions to be thine in heart and life, which we have this day been led to form under the preaching of the word. Our hearts are fixed, O Lord; our hearts are fixed; we will sing and give praise. O grant that the impressions of this day may remain with us through the week, so that men may take notice of us that we have been with Jesus. We are exposed to manifold temptations; the love of many waxeth cold; may the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier, without whom we can do nothing, inhabit within us, as in a living temple, and make us thy separated, covenanted, and peculiar heritage. We entreat thee, living and true God, in behalf of thy servants who have this day been labouring in the word and doctrine; that many conversions occurring under their ministry may gladden their hearts; that a banner may be given to them to display because of the truth; and that they may see the walls of Jericho fall before the sound of the gospel trumpet. Do thou go forth with all who devote themselves to the missionary work in foreign lands; approve the great cause of missions to be thine own cause, Lord God Jehovah; disperse to the four winds of heaven all heathen, Mahomedan, and popish delusions; may the clear light of the Star of Bethlehem break through every opposing cloud, till the day come, thou hastening its coming, when as there is one God, Saviour, and Sanctifier in heaven, there shall be one faith, one love, one fold on earth. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Take unto thee, beloved Lord, thy mighty power, and reign.

Do thou be near, gracious Father, this night, as we sleep, giving us quiet and healthful rest, and if such be thy will, bringing us to the light of another day. Be ever with us, and with all whom we love, whether in health or sickness, whether in prosperity or adversity. Guide us while we live; support us when we are dying; and thereafter receive us to everlasting glory, through the atoning blood of the covenant. And all we ask is for Christ's sake alone. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 5.

SCRIPTURE—1 SAMUEL II.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—11. This is such a song as became the mother of the infant Samuel, the future judge and prophet of God's people. It breathes a spirit of the most pious gratitude, the loftiest and most ardent devotion, and reminds us of the magnificent hymn of Mary, when saluted as the mother of the promised Saviour, wherein she expresses her profound sense of the eminent and undeserved privilege vouchsafed her in being honoured to usher into the world the expected Messiah. To the coming and character of this Prince and Saviour, Hannah's song of praise distinctly points, under the expressions 'the Lord's King' and 'Anointed.' Rapt into futurity, she is carried out, in her thoughts of the wisdom and holiness of the divine government, to the contemplation of that period when, under his reign, universal order and happiness shall be established, and all the enemies of God silenced for ever. Thus, having obtained her child by earnest prayer, Hannah is not unmindful of the thankfulness due for so signal an answer to her petitions; and one matter of praise suggests another, till, by the spirit of prophecy, she espies some distant gleamings of the glory of the Redeemer's kingdom. The weeping suppliant is converted into the grateful encomiast of the divine power and mercy. In her prosperity she remembers the oppression and despondency of her heart in the season of her distress, that the contrast may exalt her conceptions of the goodness of her God; and she is now as liberal in her thanksgivings as formerly she was loud and frequent in her supplications. Ingratitude has no place in a gracious soul. 'He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.'

How exalted is the privilege, and how solemn the personal obligations of those who have been the children of many prayers, the sons of many vows! and to how much esteem are pious mothers entitled, for their usefulness in upholding and perpetuating a knowledge of religion, and a sense of its excellency in the world! To their early instructions have many of the most valuable ministers of the church

of Christ been indebted for that incorruptible seed which, taking deep root in their soul, and watered by the dews of divine grace, has afterwards yielded a rich and plenteous harvest. How great the influence, how deep the responsibility of mothers, how invaluable to the world the mother who exercises her influence assiduously and conscientiously for the benefit of the world! Faithful and godly parents are warranted, by scripture, to entertain the highest expectations, from their pious instructions and fervent prayers as a means, by the blessing of God's grace, to work the conversion of their children. Ver. 12—36. But while personal piety and consistency of character are indispensable to the success of parental instructions, let it not be forgotten that these, even thus recommended, may be defeated by imprudence and sinful indulgence. While Samuel was increasing in wisdom as in stature, Eli's sons were becoming the reproach of the nation, and bringing upon themselves and family swift destruction. Destitute not only of a spirit of piety, but lost to all sense of decency, they defiled the very courts of the tabernacle with their abominations, scandalized all Israel by their forcible exactions, their unblushing profanity, and horrid abuse of divine worship; and provoked God to threaten their whole house with speedy and terrible ruin. Behold the disastrous effects of a neglected education, of early indulgence, of weakness, or timidity, or lenity, on the part of a father, when the honour of God and the good of his children demanded the sternest exercise of authority. Their habits of early purity dissolved, and the energy of their minds destroyed, the young, in this case, become the victims of every unruly lust, a curse instead of a blessing to all around, peculiarly a curse to their parents, who stand chargeable as partners of their crimes, in that, like Eli, they restrained them not. 'The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.' At the same time, calmness and moderation, and a disposition to kindness rather than to rigour, should distinguish the governor, whether of a nation or a family. 'Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.'

PRAYER.

O God, thou art he who setteth the solitary in families, and thou hast promised to be the God of all the families of Israel. We praise thee for the endearing ties by which we are united. May they constrain us to pray and labour with a view to one another's true welfare, temporal and eternal. We thank thee for the blessing of godly parents and relatives, and for the unspeakable advantages of early instruction in the fear of the Lord. Alas, O God, how disproportioned has our improvement been to the number of our opportunities! How far short have we come of thy glory! Give us, we beseech thee, a spirit of repentance for our past

sins and imperfections. Cleanse us in that fountain thou hast opened to the house of David. And grant unto us wisdom and grace to walk in the way in which thy servants have taught us, to follow their path, considering the end of their conversation, and to set thee, the Lord, ever before us, that thou mayest direct our steps. We bless thee for our preservation through the night, and for the mercies of this morning. We bless thee for the spiritual rest of the past sabbath, for the solemn services of thy sanctuary, and the opportunities we enjoyed of entering into thy courts, and paying our vows unto the Most High. May a sanctifying influence remain upon our hearts from the sacred exercises in which we were then engaged. May thy Spirit seal every good impression upon our hearts. May he lead us into all truth; and, amid the turmoil and business of the world, to which we are about to return, may he call up those motives and considerations by which we should be actuated as the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus. Lord, let not the love of things seen and temporal exclude from our contemplation the invisible realities of the eternal world. Write with thine own finger the solemn truths of thy word upon our souls; and may we be living epistles of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, known and read of all men. We look to thee for needful support and guidance in the duties and trials of the day. Prepare us for prosperity, its dangers and seductions; prepare us for adversity, its disappointments and bereavements; prepare us for our great and last change, and fit us for spending an eternity with thee. Increase our faith, our spirituality, our heavenly-mindedness; and as every day is bringing us nearer to the hour of our departure, may every day find us living more with a view to our final account, and growing in a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. And now, may the very God of peace sanctify us wholly; and we pray God that our whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LXIV.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN I. 1—14.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—6. One important object designed by this Gospel was to confute sundry heresies which, even in the apostolic age, had sprung up in the church, respecting the person, nature, and offices of Jesus Christ

God often brings good out of evil—and so the errors referred to were overruled as an occasion to establish the faith of believers in the eternal Sonship of Christ, in his divine authority and power as a Saviour, and to confirm the discoveries that had already been made of the counsels of heaven in the wonderful work of redemption. Jesus is appropriately called the Word. 1st. In respect of his person; because as our words are the image of our thoughts, so is he the image of the invisible God, the exact impression of his substance; 2dly. In respect of his office; for as our words are the interpretation to others of our mind and will, so has Christ been the great medium through whom the mind and will of the Father have been declared to the church in all ages.

Jesus, under the title of the Word, is identified with God. He existed 'in the beginning,' before the rise of the material universe, and prior to the production of any created being. He was 'with God and was God.' He co-existed with the Father, by virtue of that sameness of substance, and communion of glory and blessedness which subsist among the persons of the Trinity. When God prepared the heavens, he was there as one brought up with him. Yea, by him did God also make the worlds. The whole fabric of the universe, and every living thing that inhabits it, were called into being by his word, and continue to be upheld by his power. These doctrines are authoritatively laid down with the utmost brevity, as plain and indisputable maxims, to be received by us in faith, and with profound humility, under a deep sense that our finite minds are incapable of measuring what is infinite.

In his character of Mediator, Jesus is himself the life of men, because of that eternal life which he has purchased for believers, and to which he will raise them up at the last day. And as he is the source and centre of spiritual life, so is he of spiritual light. Let it be our earnest desire that this may not be our condemnation. Let this fundamental doctrine of the divinity of Christ, so clearly declared in this passage, be the subject of our frequent and serious meditations, that we may see more and more the excellency and all-sufficiency of that redemption in which we are invited to put our trust, and may reap more and more the comfort of believing that 'Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.' Let it not be to our condemnation that light hath come into the world, and we have loved the darkness rather than the light.

It is a weakness, incident to human nature, to entertain an undue esteem of excellent instruments and gifted messengers, and to give ourselves up to an implicit reliance on their guidance, as if they were themselves 'the true light,' instead of mere witnesses to it. Let us ever remember that they are subordinate to Christ, their and our Master and Lord.

Notwithstanding the magnificent preparations made for the reception of Christ in the world, how cruel and ungrateful was the entertainment he met with, even from his visible church of Israel, his own people and countrymen, 'his own' by many ties of gratitude and consanguinity, by covenant and by kindred! External privileges are no proof of a wholesome spiritual state. How many, in the present day, are no better than they! Are we or are we not among

the number? How consolatory is it to reflect, that while multitudes in the visible church reject Christ, there are still a chosen few who welcome him as their Redeemer and Lord! And how inestimable the benefits conferred on those who do by faith receive him as all their salvation, and all their desire! 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.'

PRAYER.

O God, we thank thee that thou hast not left thyself without a witness. We bless thee that the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared thee. And with the liveliest gratitude and the deepest reverence would we adore that Word, who in the beginning was with God, and was God, and who, in the fulness of time, came into a world that knew him not, and was made flesh, and shed his precious blood for the offspring of his own creative power, that to as many as received him he might give the privilege to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. Forbid, O Lord, that this light having come into the world, the darkness of our corrupt hearts should refuse to comprehend it. As thou didst at first command the light to shine out of darkness, so do thou shine into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. Without wisdom and grace from on high, we must lie lost in the maze of our own follies and errors; for we are of a frail and fallible nature, blinded by sin and prejudice, and bewildered by uncertainty. Enrich our souls, then, with those spiritual gifts of which we stand in need. And, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, may we be led to acquiesce in the wisdom, and to perceive the suitableness, to our wants and circumstances, of that scheme of redemption whereby we are saved, solely of free and sovereign grace, through faith in the righteousness of our divine surety. Merciful God, look upon him whom thou hast pierced, and for his sake restore unto us the joy of thy salvation; take away all our sins, and receive us graciously. We rejoice that he came into the world to save sinners, for sinners we are, O Lord; our own hearts condemn us, much more must thou who art greater than our hearts, and knowest all things. Nevertheless, reject us not, though there be no good in us; but as in Christ, thy Son, thou art ever well pleased, so in him be thou also well pleased with us, and through his meritorious obedience and atoning death, accept of us as righteous in thy sight. While we pray for ourselves, we at the same time offer up our prayers in behalf of a world lying in wickedness. Visit the

dark corners of the earth, and cause ignorance and horrid cruelty speedily to disappear before the enlightening and humanizing influence of the Sun of righteousness. Bless, in an eminent manner, our native land, and all orders and degrees of men amongst us. May all in authority rule in thy fear, and may those under them live quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty. We pray for the ministers of thy word throughout the land, that they may be men of power, by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, and that by the eloquence of their lives, and the purity of their doctrines, they may draw many from their idols to the service of the living God, and may edify and build up thy people in their most holy faith. Abundantly bless our friends, and graciously forgive our enemies. Finally, O Lord, we pray for all who stand in need of comfort and consolation. Have compassion on the sick and the sorrowful. Mitigate the severities to which the poor are exposed; and do thou put it into the hearts of those to relieve them to whom thou hast given the ability. We commend ourselves to thy care through the night. Let no evil come nigh our dwelling; and if we should see the light of another morning, may we rise refreshed, to follow with new ardour in our Christian course. And all that we ask is for the sake and in the name of Christ. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM IX. 7.

SCRIPTURE—1 SAMUEL III.

REMARKS.

In this chapter we now see Samuel called and established to be a prophet of the Lord. Having been faithful over a few things, he was now to be made ruler over many things. At this time prophecy was rare and precious in Israel: 'there was no open vision,' no persons publicly known to have visions, to whom the people might resort to learn the divine mind and will. Samuel was the first settled and acknowledged prophet since the days of Moses; a circumstance that made his call more surprising and valuable as a token of God's favour to himself and the nation. The manner of God's first manifestation of himself to him was very extraordinary. When Eli, by reason of age, could hardly officiate, the Lord one morning, ere the lamps of the tabernacle were extinguished, called to Samuel by name, as he lay in a bed near to that of Eli. Supposing it to have been Eli's voice, Samuel ran to him to ask his will, but was told he had not called, and was bid lie down again. All this having been thrice repeated, Eli at last suspected that God had spoken to Samuel. He instructed him accordingly, if

called any more, to reply, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.' The chapter informs us what was the result. The Lord did appear to his young servant, revealed to him the shocking calamities that would quickly come upon the Hebrews, and especially upon the family of Eli, 'because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not,' and assured him that nothing would prevail with him to continue the succession to the high priesthood in Eli's posterity. At the urgent request of Eli, Samuel reluctantly disclosed to him the purport of his vision, when the aged high priest received the message with an expression of the devoutest submission to the divine will. The door of mercy, as regarded the temporal judgments denounced against him and his house, was now irrevocably shut. The patient submission of Eli on this terrible occasion, is an admirable example of the silent reverence due from us to a righteous and sovereign God, whose dispensations, however painful, are ever more full of mercy than we deserve. 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.' At the same time, the mournful effects of his easy and compliant disposition, in so far as the temporal interests of his family were concerned, may teach us the sad danger of indecision in the affairs of our soul. The blood of Jesus Christ now cleanseth from all sin; but if we secure not an interest in him, while it is yet the accepted time and day of salvation, there remaineth nothing for us but the threatened consequences of guilt and impenitence. Our iniquities shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever. O the dreadfulness of being lost beyond hope or possibility of recovery.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as our continual preserver and benefactor. Thou art never weary in doing us good. Thou givest us all things richly to enjoy. Thou preservest our souls from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. Blessed be God, who daily loadeth us with his benefits, even the God of our salvation. We praise thy name above all, for the high hopes to which thy people are called in thy word, and for the precious promises of an undefiled and unfading inheritance in heaven. Alas! what reason have we to bewail our insensibility to what is noble and exalted in our prospects, when we think of the slight influence they exercise over us, and that unmoved by their native attractions, we require all thy reproofs and threatenings to compel us to attend to our own best interests. O Lord, may the powerful working of thy Holy Spirit overcome our aversion to things spiritual and heavenly. And may he lead us to attend to the things that belong to our eternal peace, lest they be for ever hid from our eyes. May we anticipate the day of Christ's second coming, when he shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, and we shall each appear before his judgment-seat, to receive his award.

Grant to us, O God, so to live and watch, that these hopes and expectations may be to us full of joy. May we have our loins habitually girt about with truth, and the lamp of faith burning in our hearts, that we may go forth to meet our Lord with joy, and not with grief, and may enter in with him, ere the door be shut. Be with us, O Lord, this day. Bless us in our out-goings and in-comings, and keep us under the shadow of thy wings. Deliver us from all fears and dangers of a temporal nature, from anguish of mind and pain of body, from being disturbed with worldly cares and griefs, compassed about with wants, and beset with the perils either of poverty or of riches. O thou who providest the ravens their food, and arrayest in beauty the lilies of the field, do thou supply all our returning wants; and give us that composure of mind amid all the dispensations of thy providence which flows from a sense of our dependence on a bountiful and merciful Father, who afflicteth not willingly, nor grieveth the children of men. Above all things, may thy good Spirit keep our souls from the evil that is in the world. May he enable us to resist the wiles and temptations of the devil. And may the grace of God which hath appeared to all men, bringing salvation, effectually teach us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. And now unto God the Father, &c.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI. 8.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN I. 15—51.

REMARKS.

'All men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not, and many were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.' But John himself, faithful to the design of his ministry, uniformly ascribes to Jesus the pre-eminence, and refuses to acknowledge the superior dignity of his person and office. The one was the Son, the other only the prophet of the Highest; the one the Mediator, the other but the messenger of the New Testament. Ministers of the gospel should ever seek the glory of their Master as their highest end, and carefully guard against any respect to themselves that might encroach on his honour. But even in the daily intercourse of life, the example of the Baptist may teach us to be ready to acknowledge, and not as too many are, meanly jealous of the superior worth and merit in others.

From the beginning of the world, Jesus has been

the only revealer of God to the church. The visions spoken of as made by Jehovah to his ancient people, were made by the eternal Son, and with the Father, in essence, will, and counsel.

John was not willing that others should think of him more highly than they ought to think. He would not suffer his character to be misapprehended, even when the mistake seemed to conduce to his honour and advantage. Far from being the Messiah, or Elias, or that eminent prophet whom the Jews expected to be raised up as an illustrious herald of the Messiah, he was but a voice crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord. The design of his mission was to rectify the mistaken views entertained of the person, character, and kingdom of the expected Saviour, and to prepare a passage in the hearts of men, by which he might enter and take possession. This he did by preaching earnestly and importunately the necessity of bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, and by exploding the fond notion entertained by the Jews of the advantages they derived from a carnal descent from Abraham, and from the superstitious observance of the ceremonial law. In token of their admission to new privileges, and their undertaking new obligations, he further administered the holy rite of baptism to his disciples, a circumstance which appears especially to have roused the jealousy of the priests, as implying an entrance into a new communion, and a solemn engagement to the duties of a new rule of religion. To the inquiry of the priests as to his right to administer this ordinance, John in substance replied, that his baptism was not designed to make proselytes to himself, but referred the people for acceptance and salvation to another just about to be manifested. Its efficacy depended on the faith and obedience of Him who is the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, and whose prerogative it is to baptize with the Holy Ghost. Learn from this narrative, that the hearts of men are by nature unprepared to receive Christ. They are insensible of sin, and inflexible to God's will. The extent and requirements of the divine law must therefore be proclaimed, and the thunders of its threatenings launched at the head of the guilty, until their spiritual pride be subdued, and they be shaken out of that false security, that fatal indifference, in which they are locked up, and the conviction of their sinfulness and wretchedness be carried home to their inmost soul. Until the conscience be wounded and pricked, and the heart sees no good in itself, the sinner will never apply in earnest to the Lord Jesus for pardon and salvation. 'They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.'

Let us imitate the humility of the Baptist, in abasing ourselves, but also his love to Christ, in exalting the Redeemer, honouring the Lamb of God, and pointing him out for Salvation to all the ends of the earth.

PRAYER.

O thou everlasting Father and prince of peace, we bless thee that thou didst send thy messenger before thee, to prepare thy way, and to bear witness of thee, that all men might believe in

thee for the remission of sins. Grant unto us hearts gratefully to receive his testimony, and to believe the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. And believing this record, may we be enabled to imitate in thy service the zeal, and ardour, and sincerity of thy forerunner. May we not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Being made partakers of his spiritual baptism, may we rise with him unto newness of life; and knowing him experimentally in the beauty of his person, the perfection of his righteousness, the fullness and all-sufficiency of his grace, may we rejoice to acknowledge our obligations to thee, and to speak of the glories and excellencies of Him, of whom the Father declared, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And may our love and admiration of him appear especially in our earnest desires that those near and dear to us may be brought to taste and see that thou art gracious. O may we all be members of that holy and heavenly family of which God is the Father, Christ the elder brother, and whose spiritual supplies the Holy Ghost graciously furnishes according to the necessities of the several members. We desire, heavenly Father, to bewail before thee the sins and short comings of the past day. Wash us, we unfeignedly beseech thee, in the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, and grant us more and more to become one spirit with him, as he became one flesh with us. Write a law of gratitude upon our hearts for the undeserved mercies, temporal and spiritual, we daily enjoy at thy hand; and may our gratitude appear in an increased devotedness to thy service, and a growing conformity to thine image. We pray for others as well as for ourselves. Bless the whole family of mankind, and give success to the means employed for extending to others the religious privileges we ourselves enjoy. May the Sun of righteousness enlighten every land, and the Day-star from on high arise upon those who are living in the shadow of death. We implore thy special blessing on our native country, and that thou wouldst long preserve to her the inestimable benefits of outward peace and inward security. Let thy corn and wine abound, that there may be food in our land for man and beast. Bless all constituted authorities throughout the land. May they legislate and rule in thy fear, and with a single eye to the peace, the happiness, the moral and religious well-being of the whole people. Our friends and relatives, wherever they are, do thou abundantly bless, and keep them from the evil that is in the world, especially from the evil of offending thee. O Lord, we pray for all in every

quarter who stand in need of comfort and consolation. Bow down thine ear unto their cry, and sanctify the afflictions with which they are visited to their spiritual improvement and growth in grace. We desire to commit our bodies and souls to thy keeping through the night. Watch over our slumbers, and should we be raised to the light of a new day, may we spend it and all our days in thy fear. And now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 59—64.

SCRIPTURE—I SAMUEL IV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The leading doctrines which this chapter illustrates, are: 1. That the Lord is a holy and a righteous God, not only hating sin, but resolved that it shall not pass unpunished. 2. That God is especially displeased with public sins, or with the sins of his public servants, particularly with those who are appointed to officiate in holy things. 3. That he holds parents and magistrates responsible for the full and vigorous exercise of the powers with which he has entrusted them, for the correction of their children and subjects. 4. That all his purposes are unchangeable, and that when his intimated judgments do not lead sinners to repentance, it may be concluded that they are about to be speedily executed.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

When those persons who, notwithstanding their continued enjoyment of the outward privileges of religion, fall into a state of degeneracy and ungodliness, are visited by God with any of his righteous judgments, they are more apt to complain of the visitation than to improve by it; and, in inquiring into its causes, do think of any thing rather than their own sins, although these are the very things of which it is intended to remind them. Through the force of habit or the influence of superstition, men are often careful to maintain the forms of godliness, long after they have manifestly been denying its power; and because these forms are maintained, they blindly imagine that they are entitled to the divine protection and support. Nay, such persons sometimes place greater confidence in the ordinances and symbols of religion, or in their own unscriptural rites, than in the presence and favour of that God whom they profess to honour. They are satisfied with the sign, and have no enlightened concern about the thing which is signified. They are more concerned that the ark be with them, than to possess

any satisfactory evidence that God is with the ark. They dishonour him more by the observance than they would do by the neglect of his ordinances, because they exalt these ordinances into the place of God himself, or convert them into idols! When such delusions are found to exist even among those who professedly belong to the commonwealth of Israel, no wonder that the heathen and avowed infidels entertain no higher notions of the symbols of God's worship than they do of the images of heathen deities. It is worthy of notice, however, that under the influence of mere natural conscience, there is something appalling in the idea of the presence of the true God, even to those who have no just conception of his attributes. And jealous as he is for his own honour, and important as it is that he should be glorified in the sight of the heathen, yet he will rather let his avowed enemies triumph for a season, and 'deliver his strength into captivity,' than encourage hypocritical or backsliding professors to put their trust in the mere signs and ordinances which he has instituted, while they are indifferent to the presence and blessing of Him who alone is worthy of their confidence. There is something awful in the thought of God's vengeance overtaking impenitent sinners in the midst of their sins, even though, at the moment, they be contending with his open enemies. But it is a relief to the mind to contrast with this the mercy which he mingles with the punishment of those offending servants who have humbled themselves for their offences. When informed that awful calamities were in reserve for himself and his family, Eli devoutly and submissively replied, 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.' He died a most striking death, as a solemn warning to others; but in the hours which preceded his dying, he evidently showed that his personal and family afflictions did not take so deep a hold on his heart as did his concern for the ark and the glory of God. It was this, as in the case of his pious and tender-hearted daughter-in-law, that made him comparatively insensible to all other joys and sorrows. The glory was departed from Israel, and the dying saint, in bewailing the event, gave a pleasing indication, that on his own departure, he was about to be admitted to the open vision of a brighter glory that never should depart!

PRAYER.

Thou art great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; thou art to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Honour and majesty are before thee; strength and beauty are in thy sanctuary. Thy glory thou wilt not give to another, neither thy praise to graven images. O Lord, all flesh have corrupted their way before thee. They have all been guilty of departing from the living God. They have not liked to retain God in their knowledge. They have worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Alas! alas! we still feel that the human heart is prone

to follow after idols. It still goeth after its covetousness, too readily yielding up to some object of earthly attachment, that place in its affections which thou alone art entitled to occupy. We lament to think how much we are disposed to walk in the sight of our own eyes, and after the imagination of our own hearts, to trust in the wisdom of our own devices, and to go forth in the confidence of our own strength. O teach us that our own wisdom is but folly, and that our own strength is but weakness. Let us no longer worship that which is not God, nor place our trust in an arm of flesh. Let us no longer have any confidence in any of our own purposes or performances, in any of our own services or sufferings, but only in Him who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Have mercy on us, O Lord, notwithstanding our manifold sins and provocations. We would think, both with comfort and with holy awe, of the mercy and judgment which were mingled in thy dealings with thy offending people of old. Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou seekest vengeance of their inventions. When thou seest fit to correct us for our iniquities, O do thou remember mercy; and even when we are smarting under the rod of thy chastisements, enable us to say, 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.' As a proof that thou hast not forgotten to be gracious, O help us, even in the deepest of our afflictions, to feel a holy and permanent concern for the glory of thy name, the purity of thy worship, and the triumph of thy gospel. Let each of us be ready to say, Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. Even under the hiding of thy countenance let us be convinced that thou wilt never forsake us utterly. Most merciful God! we have laid us down and slept; we have awaked, for the Lord sustained us. Keep us in thy fear during the whole course of the day, to which thou hast brought us. Amid the various duties and endearments of life, may we never forget that thou God seest us, that thy favour is life, and thy loving-kindness better than life. Show us thy salvation. May we love each other out of a pure heart, fervently, but so that God in Christ Jesus, shall, at all times, be the supreme object of our love. Guide us by thy counsel, and afterwards receive us into glory, through Jesus Christ our strength and Redeemer. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LV. 1—4.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. From the circumstance of our Lord's accepting an invitation to be present at a marriage-feast, and from his performing a miracle to supply what was necessary for the entertainment, it is obvious, first, that instead of discountenancing or prohibiting marriage, he was ready to honour it as a divine institution; and, secondly, that on proper occasions, festive entertainments among friends are perfectly consistent with the spirit of his religion, provided that all levity and excess are carefully avoided. In the next place, it is manifest, from the gentle but dignified reproof which our Lord addressed to his mother, when she reminded him that their friends had no wine, that, however amiable might be her motives in so doing, she had no right, as an earthly parent, either to suggest or to dictate to him as to the exercise of his almighty power. His expressions, as exhibited in our language, may seem, at first, to be somewhat wanting in tenderness and respect. It must be remembered, however, that it was only in regard to her mistaken and unwarranted interference that he said, 'What have I to do with thee?' and that in addressing her by the term 'woman,' he made use of an appellation, which, as then employed, was consistent with the utmost respect, the same indeed, by which he afterwards addressed her, under feelings of the most tender endearment, while he was suspended on the cross. But respectful and affectionate as his feelings were to her, he could not permit her to counsel him in the character of the Messiah, as to when, how, or in whose behalf, he should begin the display of his miraculous powers. And if she was not permitted in this respect to counsel him, even in the time of his humiliation, what infatuation and impiety must there be on the part of those, who not only account her altogether sinless, but invoke her to command him, now that he is exalted to the majesty of the heavens! She herself felt very differently, silently submitting to the just reproof, apparently comforted that still he had not refused to do what had been suggested, and exhorting others implicitly to comply with whatever he requested. Ver. 6—11. Public and indubitable miracles are the indispensable and conclusive attestation of a divine commission; but the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ were intended for a still higher purpose than this. They were intended to 'manifest forth his glory.' This is never said with respect to any other by whom miracles were wrought. He was more than a messenger, teacher, or prophet, sent from God. The mighty works which he performed, were performed, not by a power which was merely imparted to him, but by a power which was inherent in him as one with the Father.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

In entering by marriage into the most important and endearing relation of human life, those who are professedly the friends of Christ should see that they

proceed in such a way that they may consistently pray for, and reasonably expect, the honour and blessing of his spiritual presence; and it will always be found that those social scenes and occasions are the happiest in which our conversation is most strictly such as becomes the gospel, and in which we have a lively and abiding sense that even then his eyes are upon us. We must never, either from zeal for his glory, or from a desire to promote the comfort of others, far less from any less honourable motive, presume to dictate what course of procedure it becomes him to pursue: and when he finds occasion to reprove us, we must not only take it patiently, but be so much the more ready to leave all things to his disposal, and exhort others implicitly to obey him.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most blessed God, we adore and worship thee as the king eternal, immortal, and invisible. No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh. We thank thee that the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. We rejoice to know, that he is the one Mediator between God and man, and it is through him alone, that we now venture to approach thy footstool. We bless thee, O Lord, that while it pleased thee that in him all the fulness of the Godhead should dwell, and that all men should honour the Son even as also they honour the Father, he graciously condescended, after becoming a partaker of our nature, to partake of the innocent enjoyments of human life, and to adorn and hallow, by his presence, the meetings of those who rejoiced with trembling, and who were ready to receive him as the sent of God. We bless thee that although he came to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows, he graciously shared in the endearments and in the joys of those who, by seeking his fellowship, showed that, even in their gladness, the fear of God was before their eyes. We bless thee, that great as was his zeal for the manifestation of the glory of God, great also was his zeal in doing good to the souls and bodies of men, seeking to leave a blessing behind him in every family into which he entered. We give thee thanks, O Lord, for the gracious invitations which he has addressed to us in the gospel. O that we may listen to his voice, Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Having professedly believed on

him for his works' sake—having believed the testimony which thou hast given us of thy Son—having been persuaded and captivated by the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; may we be ever careful to adorn the doctrines of God our Saviour; and wherever we are, in whatever society we appear, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, may we do all to the glory of God. And now, most merciful Father, if, in the course of the past day, we have at any time forgotten the invisible presence in which we were placed; if in the intercourse of business, the relaxations of society, or the endearments of the family circle, we have done any thing which our divine Master would not have countenanced, and cannot approve; do thou, for his sake, graciously forgive us. Thou knowest what is in each of us; O do thou cleanse us from all filthiness of the flesh, and of the Spirit. May our bodies and souls be as living temples of the Holy Ghost; and may we be prepared at last for being admitted into the society and the felicities of the upper sanctuary, amid the spirits of just men made perfect. We would now, O Lord, both lay us down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest us dwell in safety. And all we ask, is through Jesus Christ, the Son of thy love. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXVIII. 24—29.

SCRIPTURE—I SAMUEL IX.

REMARKS.

Several important ends are often served by a single event or dispensation of God's providence. For the sins of his ancient people, he permitted the ark to be taken by their enemies, and yet the latter, for the impiety of taking it, were visited with such signal disasters, that they were anxious to get quit of the possession, although they were allowed for many years to oppress the Israelites. By the divine blessing on the pious and unceasing labours of Samuel, this people were at length brought to repentance, and exhibited the signs of a very general and powerful revival in religion. Still, however, there were many things with which God was not well pleased. Toward the latter end of Samuel's life, 'he made his sons judges over Israel;' and although this appears to have been done with general approbation, yet they were afterwards found to be guilty of perverting judgment. With this the people were far more offended than they had been, on other occasions, with sins of the grossest enormity against God; and being weary of being ruled by prophets and judges, they came to Samuel with an urgent application that, like the nations around them, they might have a king to

govern them. Samuel was displeased with the proposal, but laid it before the Lord in prayer. God told him that he regarded it as a rejection not so much of his servant as of himself. 'They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me.' Yet he commanded him to hearken to their voice, but 'solemnly to protest unto them,' and to 'show unto them the manner of the king that should reign over them.' They still insisted, however, on having a king to fight their battles; and, to use God's own words, as elsewhere recorded, (Hos. xiii. 11.) 'I gave thee a king in mine anger;' one who should be a fit instrument, not only for punishing them on account of their sin and rebellion, but, at the same time, for successfully conducting them against their warlike enemies. It is evident, then, that here we have an instance of God's doing all things according to the counsel of his will, and that in granting the wishes of his creatures he frequently has ends in view which they are far from contemplating. God raises up and selects those individuals who are peculiarly fitted, both in body and mind, for the duties which he assigns to them, but this is not to be understood as implying, in every case, an approbation of their character. The accomplishment of his purposes is generally brought about by the agency of secondary causes, and often by the agency of persons to whom these purposes are altogether unknown, who are influenced by motives unconnected with any desire to do him honour, and who are directed in their movements by circumstances apparently the most accidental or trivial.

It is very remarkable that, although the elders and people of Israel started the proposal of having a king, and peremptorily insisted on its being carried into effect, yet they did not propose any individual to be exalted to that high dignity, and that none of all their leading men set himself forth as a candidate for such a distinction. They were bent on their own plan, yet they left it to Samuel, or rather to him whose servant he was, to carry it into effect, saying, 'Make us a king; give us a king to judge us.' Thus we find, that even while, in one sense, they rejected God, they did not forget the direction which their fathers had long before received, (Deut. xvii. 15.) 'Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose.' In this respect they are worthy of commendation; but let us see that, in all things, we commit our way to the Lord. Let us regard less temporal losses than the loss of the soul; honour God's servants for 'their works' sake,' acknowledge God in every thing, and make no delay in doing what he commands.

PRAYER.

Ever blessed and most glorious God, how unsearchable are thy judgments, and thy ways past finding out! Thou doest according to thy will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay thy hand, or say unto thee, What doest thou? Thou art the Most High, who rulest in the kingdom of men, and givest it to whomsoever thou wilt. Thou art God, and there is none else. Thou declarest the end from the beginning, and from ancient

times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. Thou preservest and governest all thy creatures and all their actions. Thou leavest them, while answerable to thee, to follow the dictates of their own feelings and inclinations, and yet overrulest these for the accomplishment of thine own purposes. Thou guidest them by a hand unseen, and leadest them by a way which they have not known. The heart of a man deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps. The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord. O Lord, we have been guilty of departing from thee, the living God. All of us, like sheep, have gone astray. When we are the farthest from thee, we are the least disposed to understand our errors or seek after God. O turn away our hearts and our eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou us in thy way. Instead of being eagerly engaged in pursuing some of the various forms of worldly honour, advantage, or enjoyment, do thou teach us to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things, so far as needful, shall be added unto us. We thank thee, O Lord, that thou sentest thy Son into the world, to seek and to save that which was lost; that all who believe in his name have been chosen in him before the foundation of the world; and that he has solemnly declared, 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' Enable us, we beseech thee, cordially to accept of his gracious invitations; to embrace him as all our salvation and all our desire; to submit ourselves to his authority as our only spiritual sovereign; to place ourselves and all our affairs entirely at his disposal; to render him the undivided homage of our affections and our lives; and to rejoice in the blessed prospect of being made partakers with him in the kingdom which he has purchased and prepared for all them that love him. Heavenly Father, we are unworthy of the very least of thy favours. We are unworthy either of the bounties of thy providence, or of the privileges and ordinances of thy gospel. We are unworthy either to hear or to declare 'the word of reconciliation;' yet may we not on this, or on any other ground, presume to decline any duty to which thou art pleased to call us. In every department of thy service, grant us grace to be found faithful, and honour us, if it seem good in thy sight, with an abundant measure of success. Father of mercies, do thou this morning accept of and bless the sacrifice of our adoration and gratitude for all thy goodness both to our bodies and to our souls. We would set out on the journey and

duties of the present day, beseeching thee, with thine eye set upon us, to give us direction. Show us, in all things, what thou wouldest have us to do or to avoid; and be thou ever at our right hand, that we may not be moved. Pardon the sins of these our services, and accept of and answer us, for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son; and the glory be thine, now and for evermore. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLL 3—6.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN III.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 4, 11. Our Saviour, in striking terms, teaches Nicodemus the necessity of being made spiritually and morally a new creature, before he could enter into the kingdom of God. Nicodemus could not comprehend his meaning, and marvelling how these things could be, received no other reply than by being referred to some of those terrestrial changes of the reality of which he could not doubt, although he was necessarily ignorant of the mode in which they were produced. If the agency of the wind is known only by its effects, why should we expect to have any other way of knowing the agency of the Spirit in the regeneration of the soul? The more to convince Nicodemus of the unreasonableness of his doubts, Jesus told him that he here spoke of what he knew, and testified of what he had seen, and appealed to him if it was consistent with the profession which he had already made of his belief that he was a teacher come from God, thus to hesitate in receiving his testimony, merely because it related to a subject, in some respects, above the reach of his faculties. Ver. 12, 13. Jesus had to tell him, moreover, of higher things than these; of things, compared with which these might, in several respects, be justly denominated earthly things. He had to tell him of heavenly things, things which were altogether beyond and above human observation; things which rested entirely on his individual testimony, as the individual who alone had come down from heaven, and whose own mysterious nature as 'God with us,' constituted one of the sublimest of those wonders which he had to reveal; for, at the very moment that he spoke to him, he was the Son of man, who even then was in heaven! Our Saviour intimates to Nicodemus other doctrines of vast interest and importance, declaring the love of God and the way of life to him, and the danger of those who rejected it, the guilt being their own.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The Lord Jesus Christ is ready to receive all who come to him under anxieties on religious subjects. He is tender toward their infirmities, and knows, even when their faith is in the weakest state, to what a measure of strength and courage it may ultimately

attain. The origin of our spiritual disease, as sinners, is in the heart, and therefore the renewing of the heart must form the first part of our spiritual cure. This, and not merely a reformation of outward morals, is absolutely indispensable to our being made meet for the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit is the sole author of this blessed change in the soul, with all its faculties and affections; and instead of perplexing ourselves about the mode and mysteries of his operation, our great concern should be to pray that it may be exerted on our souls, and that we may ascertain its reality by experiencing its sanctifying and comforting effects. The testimony of one accredited by miracles should be sufficient to silence all our objections, and fully to settle our belief, even in regard to those sublime doctrines and mysteries of redemption which it could never have entered into the heart of man to conceive. Of these, Jesus is the original, 'the faithful and true witness'; and here he may justly be said to 'bear witness of himself,' for the first of them has immediate reference to the union of the divine and human nature in his own person, that 'great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh!' If any thing can add to the amazement which the announcement of such a fact is fitted to produce, it is the farther declaration that the end for which he became a partaker of our nature, was one which made it absolutely necessary that he should be lifted up, or be put to an excruciating and ignominious death on the cross, as a sacrifice for our sins. It is only by faith in this crucified Redeemer that sinners can be saved; but such is the efficacy of his death, such the freeness and fulness of the salvation which he thus bestows, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but shall have eternal life. And all this glorious plan has originated in the love of God to a guilty world! How good, how transcendently and ineffably great must such love have been! And how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Thou madest man at first in thine own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, and crownedst him with glory and honour. But we have sinned, O God, and are by nature the children of wrath even as others. Thou, O Lord, art glorious in holiness; evil cannot dwell with thee; and into thy presence nothing that defileth can enter. We desire to feel the momentousness of the declaration addressed to us by Him who alone can show us the Father, and who is the one Mediator between God and man, and that we must be born again; that except we be born of the Spirit, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. We thank thee for the blessed assurance which he also has given us, that thou wilt give the Holy Spirit to them that ask thee. Breathe on us, O Lord, and say to us, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. May the Spirit convince us, if

not already convinced, of our sin and misery; may he enlighten our minds in the knowledge of Christ; may he renew our wills; and thus may he persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is freely offered to us in the gospel. We adore and magnify thy name, most gracious God, for that infinite, unchangeable, and everlasting love which prompted thee to send thine only-begotten and well-beloved Son into the world, in the likeness of sinful flesh, to become the propitiation for our sins, and by his obedience unto death, by his perfect, his meritorious, his infinite righteousness, to justify the ungodly, even as many as believe in his name. When we think of thine utter abhorrence of sin and of the awful extent in which it has polluted our whole souls, and when we think, at the same time, of thine ineffable delight in Him who was the brightness of thy glory, and the express image of thy person, how shall we speak of that love wherewith thou hast loved us, when thou sparedst not thine own Son, but deliveredst him up for us all! This is, indeed, a love which passeth knowledge. O that we may love Him who first loved us. O that we may show our love by the keeping of his commandments. O that we may thus adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, by a life and conversation such as becometh the gospel, and thus have the happiness of finding that thy Spirit, by the increase of his graces in our souls, is testifying with our spirits, that we are born again, and that our works are wrought in God. O Lord, we feel that we need to be daily renewed unto repentance. Pardon, we beseech thee, the sins of the past day. This night be at peace with our souls; give us refreshing sleep; and, when the night of death overtakes us, may we have an entrance ministered to us abundantly into thine everlasting kingdom—into the rest which remaineth for the people of God. And all that we ask, is for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 5—8.

SCRIPTURE—1 SAMUEL X.

REMARKS.

The history given us in this chapter is instructive, as well as affecting. We have to take notice in it especially of the character of Saul, and that of the people of Israel, in the circumstances in which both were placed: and the dealings of God, both with Saul, and with them, are such as ought to warn and admonish us, as with a voice from heaven, (which,

indeed, all scripture is,) that we be not ourselves found in the same condemnation.

With respect to Saul, how fair and promising is his outset in the course, which divine providence was opening before him! and yet how mournful and dismal the close of it, as we learn from the chapters succeeding. And from all this history of his life, yea, and of his death, we must see, that the fair profession he was making, as recorded in this chapter, was not sincere, or arising from true spiritual principles. How deceitful is the human heart! 'Who can know it?' and it is to our inward principles God especially looks. Many there have been, and many there are, like Saul, who, to outward appearance, did 'begin to run well;' and yet are hindered, and turned aside, by the unsubdued corruptions of their own hearts. Let each of us see that he be not of the number. Nor is there any root of bitterness more deceitful, more dangerous, more ruinous, than love of the world, of its glory and vanities. How impressively are we taught by the history of Saul the son of Kish, the vanity of all worldly acquisitions, when we prefer them in our hearts, to the things of God. But in this chapter too, we may learn much from the character of the people of Israel. It was worldly pride, vanity, and ambition, with distrust of God, that caused them to desire a king: not that they might serve God the better; but that they might be like the other nations around them. The kingly office, in itself, is an ordinance of God; but in their circumstances then they had no right to demand it. God had manifested to them and their fathers that he was able and willing to protect and to bless them, even without an earthly king; but they disbelieved God, and rejected his counsel. It is a very awful judgment when God grants those requests which an individual or a people may make, or the wishes they cherish, when these requests or wishes are in opposition to the revealed will of God! And so it was to the tribes of Israel, in the case of Saul. God granted their ungodly request, but there was a curse from him upon it to the nation of Israel. For a season they seemed to prosper with their new king; but as they did not ask him in the fear of God, so neither did they and he, in their new relation to each other, follow the commandment of God, and it ended in shame and abasement to both. How often had God led forth this people to victory over their enemies, even when they were but few, and their enemies many and mighty! How often did the arm of the Lord command deliverances for them! But behold them going forth under the king they had sought, and trusting in their own strength and wisdom,—in an arm of flesh; and what is the grievous result? The lamentation of David will tell us. (2 Sam. i. 17, &c.)

PRAYER.

Almighty and everlasting God, we are thy creatures, and thou ever rulest over us by thy power. Enable us to feel with solemnity of spirit, and in the exercise of faith, that it is with thee in all things we have indeed to do. What have we that is not thine; and what are all our

possessions without thy blessing and favour. However small our portion of the good things of this life, with thy blessing we shall be happy, and without it we can only have indignation and wrath as our portion, both now and for ever. We confess before thee, that our hearts are by nature worldly, sinful, and altogether polluted, that our affections are estranged from thee, our understandings darkened, and our imaginations vain and evil, and that continually. We are children of disobedience, and therefore heirs of wrath. Thou, O God, hast been pleased to reveal thy grace, thine abounding grace, by Jesus Christ thy Son, who is one with thee, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. By him thou hast perfected, and thou hast brought nigh unto us, a way of deliverance from the wrath to come; and a way of access to every blessing of thy favour, both in time and eternity. But we confess before thee, that we have not given due heed to the salvation which his glorious gospel proclaims, and freely offers. In all these things, we have grievously sinned: we have done despite to thy beloved Son, and to thy Holy Spirit: and we have peculiarly deserved the wrath of God. O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners. We do beseech thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, and for his sake, to enlighten our understanding, that we may behold of thy divine glory; and that we may learn the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the sin which is in us, each one; and that we may truly repent and turn to thee, with grief and hatred of our sin, and with full purpose and endeavour after new obedience. For this end, O be thou pleased to renew our will, and persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is freely offered to us in the gospel. Send thy Spirit, thy blessed, gracious, almighty Spirit, who is one with the Father, and with the Son, that he may work in us effectually; that he may lead us to Christ, that he may unite us to Christ by living faith, and that being so united to him who is the head, we may be members indeed of his body, the church, and in him be new creatures; and that a new heart may be created in us, and a right spirit implanted in us. Save us, O Lord, from trusting to any righteousness or deeds of our own, for salvation. Save us from being satisfied with being outwardly numbered with thy people. Save us, O Lord, from the power of the world, and from all its vanities. Save us from deceiving ourselves, thinking that we are converted, if thou seest us to be still unconverted. Bless to each one of us thy holy word: may we be instructed savingly by it. Bless to our

souls the whole means of grace, private and public. Pour forth thy Spirit upon us, and upon all who are outwardly privileged as we are, that we and they may be sanctified by the truth; thy word is truth. Thou hast promised thy blessing upon the provision of Zion; O fulfil thy promise through Jesus Christ, and by his Spirit, that thy name may be glorified, and thy church increased every where on earth, and perishing sinners saved. Bless, O God, all thy people on earth, and all thy servants in the gospel of thy Son. May thy glorious gospel go forth unto the utmost ends of the earth; and hasten the time when they shall remember, and turn to thee. We thank thee, as the God of our mercies, for the rest of the past night, and for the blessings and comforts of a new day. We would dedicate ourselves, and all that is ours, every day to thee. Preserve us this day from all evil and danger, and from all the ways of temptation. May we commune with thee in our hearts, amidst all the labours of our hands. Give thy blessing to our lot and our portion; and encompass us with thy favour as with a shield. Bless all our friends, forgive our enemies, and give us forgiving hearts; and may the law of kindness to all men be in our spirit continually. Prepare us for all thy holy will, conducting us by thy counsel. And graciously hear and answer these our united supplications, which we offer in the name, and through the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, be all praise and glory for ever. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CVII. 1—7.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN IV. 1—30.

REMARKS.

The people of Judah and Samaria, for their sins, had been carried away captive by the king of Assyria. After a lengthened period, they were restored, in the forbearance of God, to their own land. But the Samaritans continued to go on in their ways of sin, even openly rejecting the true worship of God according to his word; after they had been restored to their land. They were mixed and mingled very much with heathens: and they persisted, till the Saviour's time, in the same evil course, though frequently chastised of God for their sins. The remnant of the kingdom of Judah, who had returned from captivity, had re-built the temple of Jerusalem; and the worship of God, according to his law, had been re-established there, and in outward form at least maintained till the Saviour's time on earth, and at that period. The Jews, that is, the people of the kingdom of Judah, having no dealings with the Samaritans, arose,

from the opposite courses which each of them, as a people, followed: and as some historians inform us, in consequence of a particular edict issued to that effect by the sanhedrim or council of the Jews. But we may learn, in this portion of scripture, the kindness and condescension of the adorable Redeemer. He was not restrained by such considerations from showing his own mercy and grace to this individual, or to others of the Samaritans. This enmity between the two nations was not dictated by the law of God: such an edict as would forbid mutual intercourse in the kindly offices of life between them, he could not countenance; and by his holy example he reproveth it, and all such enmities. He had, indeed, in his own divine mind, a purpose of grace toward the person here spoken of, as well as toward her neighbours, who, we are told, believed upon him: and the expression, 'he must needs go through Samaria,' may be supposed to signify this; as it is known that he might have travelled by another way from out of Judea into Galilee. The conduct and behaviour of this woman, exhibits to us very strongly the character of sinners in general. At the beginning of the Saviour's conversation with her, she shows her own ignorance of all spiritual things. Yet she boasts of what she no doubt considered her own spiritual or religious privileges. 'Our fathers worshipped in this mountain,' that is, mount Gerizim, on which the Samaritans had built their temple. She is quite satisfied of being in the right way; not from any true understanding in her own mind, of the worship of God, which was due to him, and which he commanded; but because her fathers had followed this way. And then, let us observe her judgment on the points of difference between them and the Jews: 'Ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.' There is no reference made by her to the authority or commandment of God. She does not know it. She says and does, what many, many, alas, in our own days, say and do:—thinking that one form or way of worship is just as good as another; and that all may be equally right. We see how the blessed Lord Jesus reproveth this state of mind, and all such worship; how he condemns it. And we see here farther, how he causes this erring, unbelieving, and self-righteous person, to feel the truth of his sayings, and to acknowledge the holiness, the truth, the divinity of his person and character. When she is made to apprehend this,—then she confesses her sins, she respects and reverences the Saviour; and she hastens to make others acquainted with what she now feels in her own soul to be both truth and salvation. And so will it be with all who become spiritually acquainted with Christ. To know him in his work and offices, in his person and character, is the very beginning and foundation in the soul of all true godliness. Then will our former worship be seen to be worthless and sinful, yea, all that ever we did; while we knew not in truth the one living and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. Then will we confess our sins, and turn from them to God; and then will we seek that others also should be blest with the same blessings. May we seek knowledge of him. He has come nigh to every one of us by his word,

his own gospel, in which he proclaims and offers himself. The testimony of his people given us in the scriptures, calls us to him, as the testimony of this woman called the men of Samaria. And he is now the same Saviour, the same compassionate Redeemer, as he then was. And seeking unto him, we shall experience the power of his divine teaching, by his Holy Spirit, who is one with him; and who, he promises, will come and supply his personal presence on earth: and then shall Christ tarry with us, and we in blessed communion of faith with him.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we come before thee in the name of Jesus Christ thy Son, and unto thee would we seek by him who is the way, and the truth, and the life. We are altogether unworthy and undeserving of thy mercy or favour; but thou, in thine everlasting grace, hast ordained salvation for such guilty sinners as we are. Thou hast sent thy beloved Son into the world in our likeness; and we would bless thy name, as God manifested by him, that he hath given us sure testimony of thy loving-kindnesses, and of thy tender mercies. We would render thanksgiving to thee that we have been favoured with the revelation of the glorious gospel. O Lord, we confess our abuse of this great and precious blessing, in our not being led by it to seek thy salvation as the one thing needful. Suffer us not, we humbly entreat thee, to be satisfied with a form of godliness. Thou art declaring to us by thy Son that those who worship thee, must worship thee in spirit and in truth. Awaken thou our souls to see our need of being made truly such worshippers of thee, as God and our God. Thy Spirit is good, lead thou us into the land of uprightness: into this spiritual saving knowledge of thyself, which would effectually incline our hearts to worship, to love, and to serve thee continually. Thou art thoroughly acquainted with our hearts each one. And if thou knowest any one of us now before thee to be yet ignorant of thyself, and worshipping thee only in the oldness of the letter, O may thy blessed Spirit quicken us, giving us life. And as we read the kindness of Christ, his compassion to sinners, so we know, that as he was and is, such is the Spirit also, as one with him in the glorious Godhead; and in applying the work of salvation to sinners, in coming to them, and dwelling with them, converting and sanctifying the soul. May he come to us, and in our hearts may he dwell, that we may truly know the truth of all that Jesus Christ declares to us by his living word of truth; and knowing and feeling the truth in its power, may we flee to himself, who is alone our sure refuge, our righteousness, and our strength.

May we be quickened together with him; and may we be kept learning of him, and growing in conformity to his blessed and holy image. And by thy word may each of us be daily enabled to lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking; and may we, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of his holy word, that we may grow thereby. Forgive our sins, which we have this day committed against thee, whether in heart, in speech, or in conduct. And, O grant, that by thy grace ruling in us, we may be daily more and more dying unto sin and living unto righteousness. Enable us to show forth the praises of him who calleth us; and every day of our lives to be looking forward to the day of his coming, when we must render an account at his judgment-seat of all our deeds. Give us this night, in him, thy blessing and favour. Let no evil come nigh our dwelling. May we be safe in thy keeping; and if brought to another day, may we rise again in thy fear; and may our hearts seek the Lord, and live. We commend to thee, in Jesus Christ, all for whom we ought to pray. Command thou thy blessings in and through him upon them. O may thy kingdom come; and may our kindred, and friends, and neighbours, be blest in its coming to them truly in power. And may it be extended throughout the whole world, until all the families of mankind shall worship thee in spirit and in truth. May all who love thee and thy salvation, prosper. May our lot and our inheritance, and all the dealings of thy providence towards us, be blessed of thee to us unitedly, and to each one of us. Prepare us for all thy holy will, and keep us by thy power, through faith unto salvation. And all that we ask is in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, be all power, and praise, and glory. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVI. 8—12.

SCRIPTURE—1 SAMUEL XV.

REMARKS.

It is evident that Saul had never yet learned to set the will of God before his own will. The commission which Saul now received from God, by the hands of Samuel, was clear and explicit in its terms. There could be no mistaking of the matter; and, moreover, Saul did solemnly undertake to fulfil it. He assembles the army of Israel to do this. It is true the commission he received was a very terrible one, but it had come from God, by direct communi-

cation, and he had no right to dispute its terms; and he makes, besides, profession outwardly of receiving it with all due submission and reverence, and apparently he hastens to fulfil it. But in course of doing this his worldly affections were awakened; his covetousness, his love of the world, and his vain-glory. It is most probable, from the narrative given in this chapter, (ver. 8, 9.) that the proposal of sparing Agag, 'and the best of the sheep, and the oxen, and the fatlings, and all that was good,' originated with Saul himself. In sparing Agag, no doubt he was led by vain-glory, wishing to exhibit himself a great worldly conqueror on his return, by leading a king as his captive, and exhibiting him publicly; and in sparing the sheep, and oxen, and fatlings, he was influenced by covetousness, the desire of possessing what God had forbidden to be possessed by him or by the people. No doubt there were many among the people who would very readily join Saul in this counsel of saving the spoil, expecting their share of its profit. But it is equally clear that if Saul himself had adhered to the commandment of God, the people would have obeyed him. How important and how responsible is the situation of public men, of persons set over others; and how watchful ought they to be that their example be found on the side of righteousness and truth! And this applies in all its force to every one in all the relations of life—to parents and masters, to children, to servants, to neighbours, and friends, and acquaintances, mutually, for there is none whose example may not influence some others of those around him. Now, behold, in the case of Saul, how the committing of sin, of known sin, hardens the heart, and blinds and stifles the conscience of the sinner. When Saul and Samuel met, Saul says, 'I have performed the commandment of the Lord.' How daring this! How pointed and how meek in dignity is the reproof of Samuel, ver. 14. And then, how mean as well as false is the defence of Saul, laying the whole blame upon the people! But such is the nature of sin, and such its consequences in every case. It leads the miserable sinner farther and farther astray from God, and from the path of rectitude. But great peace have they who love God's law. Saul indeed pleads that he feared the people, ver. 24.; but so did Pilate, or desired to please them, when he condemned Christ unjustly. To be actuated by the fear of public censure, or by the love of popular praise, to do what is contrary to God's word, is not only sinful, but a heavy aggravation of sin. Behold, in the consequences that came upon Saul, the justice and the verity of God! Behold it, too, in the miserable end of Agag, the king of the Amalekites. With respect to the severe commandment against the Amalekites, which had been given from God, we can only say, 'Shall not the judge of all the earth do righteously?' We may rest assured that the sins of that nation had been of a very fearful and grievous kind indeed, ere God had given such commandment concerning them. Their cup had been filled; and when the measure of a nation's or of an individual's iniquity is filled up, there is a period at which the judgments of God will not longer tarry. May we all turn to God, while to us he waits to be gracious.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we confess and lament in thy presence that our hearts by nature are altogether unfaithful to thee and to thy glory's cause, in our own souls, and in the world, and that we are continually transgressing against thee. We are by nature lovers of sin, and not of righteousness and holiness. We beseech thee, O Lord, to have mercy upon us, and to visit our souls with thy salvation, sending to us, for the sake of Jesus Christ, thy Holy Spirit, to convince us of the real evil, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, that we may truly repent, and turn from sin to thee, with all our hearts. And we stand in need of receiving from thee that new heart which thou art promising to give; for without thee, and without thine effectual working in us to that end, we can do nothing aright; we cannot glorify thee as God and our God. They who are in the flesh cannot please God. We pray that thou wouldst be pleased to remember us in the love thou bearest to thine own, the unspeakable love thou hast manifested by Jesus Christ, thy Son, to perishing, guilty, unworthy sinners. Such sinners are we; and, O Lord, for his sake on whom thou didst lay the chastisement of iniquity, we pray that thou wouldst forgive our sins that are past, working in us faith in his glorious name, and enabling us, through faith, to receive the atonement which he made as our own, for, blessed be thy name, to us it is offered. We confess before thee our inability to receive it. But we come to thee, in his name in whom thou art well pleased, and we would say, We desire to believe, Lord, help thou our unbelief, and enable us to be conquerors over it. O that we were, by the faith of thy Spirit, united to thy Son, that having in him a perfect righteousness imputed to us, we might be accepted in thy sight, and that we might be partakers also of his life. Enable us, at this time, to receive with meekness the engrafted word. May we fear lest there be in any one of us the evil heart of unbelief which departs from the living God; and if thou seest any one of us still to have it, while we may be deceiving ourselves, may we fear when we read of those who had such a promising outward appearance, and yet who were not separated from their sins, because not received in the spirit of their mind. We thank thee for the mercies of the night past, and of this day. Command thy blessings this day upon us, as individuals and as a family. May we be kept and preserved from evil, from danger, from temptations, and from sin. May we walk in thy fear; and may we know the path of duty, in the light of the knowledge of thy glory shining

in our hearts according to thy word; and may no iniquity obtain dominion over us. Another of our weeks on earth draws to an end. Our times are wholly in thy hands. May we be found redeeming the time; and, O Lord, do thou prepare us for thine approaching sabbath. May we this day walk in looking forward to it, and may we receive from thee the preparation of the heart. Prepare thy blessed ordinances of the sabbath for us, and us for them. Prepare thy servants to preach and teach the everlasting gospel; and do thou, by thy Spirit, bless it in their hands to the conversion of sinners, and to the edifying of thy people. Guide us by thy counsel. Uphold thou our goings, that we may glorify thy name. Take away our sins, and graciously hear and answer our prayers, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXII. 27—30.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN IV. 31—54.

REMARKS.

The zeal of the Redeemer is accompanied by the most considerate kindness. He knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust. His disciples had gone into the city to buy bread, and having obtained a supply, probably of the simplest, if not of the coarsest kind, they return and beseech their Lord to partake of their humble fare. And while his holy zeal for his Father's glory drinks up, as it were, his spirit, and quenches his bodily appetite, he sympathises with his disciples, not reproving them, far less taunting them for the unavoidable care they now were taking to supply his bodily wants and their own. But he bears them witness how earnestly and entirely he is occupied in the business of his heavenly message and embassy. And not only does he here testify his zeal in that glorious cause, but the satisfaction and pleasure he had in it: 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.' We must then examine ourselves, and see whether we be partakers of the same spirit of mind. But we also see that the Lord Jesus looks forward with earnest desire, in the exercise of his own unspeakable love, to the increase of his own and his Father's kingdom on earth, in the salvation of perishing sinners. The disciples would naturally think that there was no great prospect of the Samaritans believing in Christ and turning to God. But God seeth and judgeth not as man sees and judges. Where we may think it most unlikely and improbable that the gospel of Christ shall have any success, there God may be preparing a people for himself, to show forth his praise. The kingdom and the power are his. Our duty is to be up and doing, each one of us to be holding forth the word of life, and waiting upon God, who alone giveth the increase, to bless it. And when we least expect,

then the powerful work of the Holy Spirit may be already beginning, and may be even now about to be manifested for the salvation of perishing souls. The account given us here of the Samaritans, is both interesting and striking. When the woman went and told them of Christ, they were led to believe that surely this must be a divine person; and we doubt not but they saw some such change manifested in the woman's own conversation and conduct, as showed that she was now indeed an altered person. This led them to Christ; and having come to him, and learned of him, then they say, 'Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.' And so has it always been. When the power of true godliness, in souls already converted, is made a means of bringing others still unconverted to consider their own ways, they too, when once they are brought truly to seek the Lord, will soon have the witness given them, in themselves, of what Christ is, and what true godliness is. And O how blessed the state of those who know, in truth, that he is indeed the Saviour to themselves! The report of the notable miracle which Jesus had wrought at Cana, on a former occasion, appears to have reached this nobleman at Capernaum. He comes to Christ, and the blessed Redeemer receives him, and did for him indeed exceeding abundantly above all that he asked or thought. Many will come to God in times of distress and suffering, and of threatened calamity. And very often God, in the dispensations of his providence, does order that to be accomplished which they so earnestly sought. But woe to them whose hearts are hardened more and more, after having received such manifestations of the goodness of God, even in temporal deliverances. They are in a very fearful condition.

PRAYER.

O Lord, what are we, thy sinful, rebellious creatures, that thou shouldst look upon us, or condescend to visit us in such loving-kindness and tender mercy as thou art manifesting in thy glorious gospel, by Jesus Christ. We have broken thy holy law, and our whole nature, and our words and deeds form one continued scene of sin and transgression against thee. And yet thou art making manifest, by Jesus Christ, thy Son, that thou hast no pleasure in our death, but art wishing that we should turn unto thee and live. None ever had more need of being turned unto thee than we have. Turn thou us, and we shall be turned. Send forth thy light with thy truth to our souls, with power and efficacy from on high. O that we felt in our own souls the need we have of Christ, and of his gracious kindness, compassion, and love, and of his almighty power to save. O may we hasten to come unto him while he is yet, by his word, and by all its appointed means, even teaching in the midst of us, and declaring to us the glad tidings of great

joy. May the time past be to us more than sufficient to have done the will of the flesh, and to be subject to sin and vanity, bringing down upon ourselves the sure wrath of God; and may we now feel and know that sin is our ruin, and that grace alone can save us. We would bless thy name, O God, that where sin abounded, that grace of thine did yet more abound, and that the glorious Mediator of the new covenant is an almighty Redeemer. The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. O do thou lead us, by thy Holy Spirit, to that fountain opened. And if thy saving work of grace be already begun in any of us now before thee, O let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, and in him, and by thy Holy Spirit, and through thine own appointed means of grace, lead us onward, strengthen us, stablish us, settle us in the faith of Christ, and in the purifying hope of his coming, and of his eternal glory. Follow with thy Spirit's teaching to our hearts, the portion of thy word we have now read and heard. May it profit us savingly. We thank thee for the mercies granted us during the day past. May our sins of this day be forgiven. May we now have access to the grace in which thy people stand; and may thy blessing be upon and around us. Keep us in safety during this night. And if it be thy holy will that we see the light of another day, as that day, O Lord, is thine own, may we be prepared to serve thee. O pour forth thy Holy Spirit upon us, that we may be enabled, on thy holy sabbath, to keep it holy as unto God. Open thou our ear to hear and our heart to understand. And may thy holy word be prepared for us, and sent to our souls by the power of the Holy Ghost. If permitted to worship thee in thy house of prayer, with our brethren, O Lord, grant us there thy special grace, that we may grow by the sincere milk of thy word. Give thy Spirit to thy servants who preach the everlasting gospel. May they preach it faithfully and fully; and may all who hear receive the engrafted word with meekness. Bless all our friends, our relatives, our benefactors; and forgive our enemies. Fit us for all thy holy will; and may thy blessings in Christ be upon us, and upon our lot. O God, hasten the time when thy holy sabbaths shall be hallowed all over the world. We commit ourselves to thee. Forgive our sins, hear our prayers, and graciously accept us in Jesus Christ. Amen.

NINETEENTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LVIII.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS LVIII. LIX.

REMARKS.

PSALM LVIII. This psalm is an appeal of David the type, and consequently of the Messiah the antitype, to the consciences of his iniquitous judges, with a description of their implacable malignity, under the character of serpents, that cannot be tamed by all the arts of the serpent charmer,—whose venomous bite is deadly. He then prays for, or it may be, prophetically, and in the character of Christ the Judge, declares their consumption as the summer torrent, their arrows to be harmless to him and destructive to themselves, and their duration like the snail that consumes its substance as it moves, or as an untimely birth that never saw the light, and their destruction to be sudden, by the whirlwind of God's wrath. The righteous shall rejoice over the ruin of the enemies of the Lord's Anointed, and then shall it be seen that the Most High God ruleth. Such is the church's song of triumph; 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah,' &c., Isa. lxiii. 1—4. Let us remember that this character of wicked men is applied, Rom. iii. to all to whom the word of God comes. Let us dread it, and pray for deliverance from the wrath of the wicked and the depravity of our own hearts; but rejoice that he that is for is mightier than all who can be against us.

PSALM LIX. was, in all likelihood, composed by David under those sufferings and trials by which God prepared him afterwards for a kingdom. The occasion is probably that recorded in 1 Sam. xix. 11—18. when his house was beset by the messengers of Saul, and they lay in wait to kill him. The psalm begins with a supplication for deliverance from all similar dangers in time to come, proceeds to describe the danger from which he had just been delivered, and concludes with praise to him who had proved his 'refuge in the day of trouble.' 'Fear not him,' says our Lord, 'who can kill the body, but fear him who, after he has killed the body, can cast both soul and body into hell.' 'I fear God,' said Colonel Gardiner, 'I fear no other fear.' Let us call to mind the occasions in our lives when our feet well nigh slipped, when we should have stumbled and fallen had not he, by his free Spirit, upheld our goings and stayed our downward course, magnifying the glory of his grace in our weakness and infirmity. Let us call to mind him who was greater than David; David's Lord as well as David's son, who endured for our sakes a far greater fight of afflictions; who was exposed to all the wiles of satan, and whose holy life rendered him the object, to the Jewish rulers, of implacable hatred, putting to death the holy One and the Just. But that which they meant for evil God meant for good; and what they did with wicked hands and hearts, God had determined before to be the way of salvation to the lost children of men. Through suffering he was perfected to be-

come the Captain of our salvation, and as the Captain was perfected through suffering, so is the soldier made like unto his captain through suffering, that he may be an heir, joint-heir with Christ of the glory that shall follow.

PRAYER.

Almighty Father, Lord of heaven and earth, this is the day which thou hast made. In it we shall rejoice and be glad. On this day a greater work than creation was finished, and declared to be very good. On the morning of this day thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, rose from the grave, declaring, not by a voice from heaven, as at his baptism, but by his glorious resurrection, that this was thy beloved Son, in whom thou art well pleased. For the sake of all that thy beloved Son suffered on earth, we beseech thee to pardon and pass by our many and great offences. Bestow on us, for the sake of thy holy One, the blessedness of that man whose sins are covered, and whose iniquities are blotted out. May Christ this day be made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and everlasting redemption. Give us, good Lord, a sweet sense of thy love and tender mercy in Christ. Draw our hearts to thyself by the cords of love, that out of the fulness of our gratitude we may cry out, What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits? We would this day renew our engagements to be Christ's, being constrained, by the mercies of God, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to him, which is our reasonable service. Fill us with a hatred of all sin and a holy jealousy over ourselves, and let thy word and Spirit this day strengthen our souls, that we may go on in our way rejoicing. On this day we would especially remember, at a throne of grace, the church which thou hast planted on earth. Be in the midst of all her worshipping assemblies, in all parts of the world, and let thy word be quick and powerful, discerning the thoughts and intents of every heart. Especially would we remember the Church with which we are connected, and which thou hast watched over since the days of the blessed Reformation, making it a blessing to us and our fathers. Perpetuate these blessings, good Lord, to the latest generations. Revive thy work of reformation in the midst of the days. Free her from every error in doctrine and in discipline, and let her clothing be of wrought gold, the righteousness of saints. That portion of the vineyard with which, in thy providence, we are connected, we commend unto the blessing of the great Head of the Church. Let great grace be upon thy servant, our pastor. Stand by him in his duties this day, that he may feed the flock

of Christ committed to his charge, as a faithful shepherd and bishop of souls. Bless the eldership of the church, and may they be patterns unto the church, and uphold the hands of the pastor in every good work. Bless and direct all those engaged in the instruction of the young on this day. May the teachers of our youth be all taught of thee. Let them see of the fruit of their labour for the godly upbringing of the young, that the next generation may be wiser and better than the present. We thank thee for the mercies of this morning, and as thou hast refreshed our bodies by the rest of the night, may our souls be this day refreshed by thy word and Spirit, that our sabbaths on earth may be a sweet foretaste of that everlasting sabbath which remains for thy people. And we would conclude our morning sacrifice in those words in which our Lord taught us to pray, saying, Our Father, &c.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LX.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS LX. LXI.

REMARKS.

PSALM LX. This psalm describes the sufferings of David and his army in the Syrian wars, and contains a prayer for deliverance; that God would grant his banner, in token of protection on his part, and of fidelity on the part of his people. He then exults in the conquest over his enemies; in their subjection to him as completely as the slave to his master; compelled to do for him the meanest offices, and expresses his security and confidence in the power of God. So may the believer—so may the church rejoice in the protection of Christ, their divine Head. He hath displayed a banner to all them that fear him. 'God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world,' the god of this world, and all that is in it, 'is crucified unto us, and we unto it.'

PSALM LXI. The sentiments are those of an exile driven from his country by persecution, who is tempted to indulge in those feelings of dreariness and desertion which come over the heart of an exile; but he betakes himself to prayer, which, if it were not the duty, would yet be the refuge of the believer in the hour of distress. None so far off but they may draw nigh to God, through Jesus Christ, and he will hear their cry from the ends of the earth. And what is the prayer of the psalmist? 'Lead me to that rock that is higher than I.' That rock is Christ. 'By faith,' says the good Bishop Horne, 'in his sufferings and exaltation, we may defy all the storms and tempests that can be raised against us by the adversary, while, as from the top of a lofty mountain, we behold the waves dash them-

selves in pieces on the shore beneath us.' That in this, as in so many of the psalms of David, the great source of consolation presented to the heart, amidst the ills of life, are the hopes of the Messiah, the Prince of peace, is very evident from ver. 6, 7. The king here spoken of is the King of saints, he of whom it is said in another psalm, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.' Here also his throne is declared to be eternal, and mercy and truth the distinction of his kingdom. Amidst the shipwreck of earthly hopes and happiness, he is the eternal Rock to which the believer should cling with firm truth, saying with Peter, 'To whom, Lord, shall I go but unto thee, for thou alone hast the words of eternal life?' In him the bereaved soul will find more than it has lost, and in the inexhaustible riches of Christ, be richer than the richest, happier than the happiest, and wiser than the wisest of mankind. Let us abide then in his tabernacle, and trust in the covert of his wings. The very cry which Jesus uttered on the cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' assures the forlorn and sorrowing heart that he will not be forsaken; that very cry of desolation is to us, in our time of need, the language of sweetest hope and consolation, and his desertion is our mightiest succour. It forbids us to despair, assures us that none who come to the Father by Christ, will be cast out. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.'

PRAYER.

Adorable Jehovah, Lord of heaven and earth, who didst so love this guilty world, as to give thine only begotten and well beloved Son, to suffer in our room and stead, we praise and magnify thy name for this thy best gift to our world. Thou didst create this world, and the fulness thereof by a word, but thou didst redeem it by the tears, and agonies, and death of thy holy One, bringing a glory to thyself greater than the glory of creation, and to us a peace and good hope through Christ, better than if we had gained the whole world. We give thee thanks for what we have read and heard this day of Immanuel and Immanuel's land. Let not the cares and lusts of the world; let not its vanities and pleasures choke the good seed sown in our hearts, and render it unfruitful; but send from above the dews of thy Spirit, to cause it to grow, and bear in our hearts the fruit of holy desires and affections. May the oil with which this day our vessels have been replenished, keep our lamps burning brightly throughout this week. Give us divine strength to carry our holy principles into holy practice, and our sabbath thoughts into daily life, that by works our faith may be perfected, becoming stronger and stronger by reason of use, making us mighty to contend with

the temptations, and patient under the trials, of life. Pardon, good Lord, the sins of thy holy day, of coldness and formality in our devotions, of careless reading and hearing of thy word, and of frivolous thoughts and conversation unbecoming thy day. Mark not the iniquity of our holy things, for in all we sin and come short of thy glory, but remember in our behalf the Lord our righteousness, him who had clean hands and a pure heart, and never lifted up his soul to vanity nor spoke deceitfully. We implore thy protection to us, and all that are near and dear to us, through the night watches. Let our sleep refresh our bodies and fit us for the duties of a new day, and spare us to enjoy the light of another morning, and to thy name, and to thy Son's name, with the Holy Spirit, be everlasting praise, glory, and honour, for ever and ever. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLIII. 3.

SCRIPTURE—1 SAMUEL XVI.

REMARKS.

God does not complain of Samuel's grief, but only of its duration. 'How long!' Samuel could not but mourn over the royal tree which he had planted, and which, for a time, looked so promising, having so soon withered; but that sorrow which is natural and becoming for a season, may be prolonged so as to become a murmuring against God's justice. The judge who passes sentence of death, may do so with a heart full of pity, and eyes filled with tears, but conscious of the justice of the sentence, his tears are soon dried up, and his heart at rest and quiet. Thus our Saviour wept, whilst pronouncing woes over Jerusalem, but because the woes were the just displeasure of him who had long waited to be gracious, his sorrow is not a prolonged sorrow. So Samuel had mourned enough over the fallen fortunes of Saul. He must now be up and doing. Another king was to be anointed in the room of him who had forfeited his crown, by his rebellion against that king to whom all the sceptres of the earth belong. As his errand is one of danger, so God bids him disguise his purpose; telling the truth but not the whole truth; taking a heifer to offer a sacrifice to the Lord, part of the preparation for the consecration of the future king. The visits of the aged judge, of late years, had been few and far between; his appearance now makes the elders of Bethlehem to tremble, and inquire whether he comes peaceably. Has he come to inquire after blasphemy, or blood, or some secret guilt that lies unatoned upon their little community? but his was a message of peace and great honour. Their city, though little amongst the cities of Judah, was now to give a ruler to Israel—of all Israel's kings the

most illustrious, at once the prophet and the ancestor of him who was to be the light of the Gentiles and the glory of Israel.

In the scene which follows the sacrifice, the sons of Jesse pass, one after another, before the aged Judge, and we learn the difference between the choice of God and the choice of man. Samuel looked for a successor to the throne like Saul, higher by the shoulders than any of the people; but God, when he would give to Israel a king, to rule his people in righteousness, chooses him not for his stature, like Saul, but for the dispositions of his heart. Probably Jesse presented all his sons in succession to the seer, whom he at all thought likely to be the object of choice, beginning with the eldest, and had either Samuel or Jesse determined the matter, David would not have been king. David was left with the flock, no one calling for him; but whom men reject, God chooses, for he looketh not on the outward appearance but on the heart. Let us all beware of being guided too much by appearances in the choice of the objects of our attachment. Goodness is the firmest cement of all earthly friendships, the only choice of which we shall have no regret. Of old the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of all which they chose, and the universal corruption of principle and morals, and the deluge, were the consequences of the evil choice. Lot chose the fair and fertile plains of Sodom, though the inhabitants were wicked before the Lord exceedingly. He pleased his eyes, but he vexed his heart, and was soon after driven out of Sodom, bereaved of all his flocks and herds, in order to avoid the fate of that devoted city. David appears to have returned to the sheep-fold, after being anointed, to await in patience God's time and way of fulfilling his own promises, but he never forgot that now he was the Lord's anointed, an act which, in his case, had not been an empty ceremony, but the emblem and medium of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He now felt within him the strivings of nobler sentiments and desires than belonged to the sheep-fold. While thus waiting on God's time, he, in all probability, felt the inspiration of many of those songs of Sion which breathe of a greater than David, even David's Son and Lord, and amidst these heavenly meditations was trained to be the spiritual ruler of God's peculiar people. How different the temper, at this time, of the reigning monarch. The Spirit of God had departed from him, like the last rays of the sun from the arctic regions, and left nothing but the reign of deadly winter. His mind is alternately depressed with melancholy gloom, and stung into madness at the thought of the falling fortunes of his house; and unable to compose or control his moody mind, his courtiers are glad to commend to him one whose musical talents and pleasing manners may soothe his melancholy, and steal away his thoughts from himself; and who is this comforter but his anointed successor, who is thus, by the guidance of providence, brought near to that court over which he was one day to preside, and for which he is now to be prepared by the alternate favours and frowns of his master. Observe the character given of young David—what a combination! A man of genius, a poet,

musician, warrior, prudent in counsel and in behaviour, in person comely, and, to crown all, 'The Lord was with him.' Of how few of 'the men of renown,' whether in arts or arms, can it be said, as of David, 'The Lord was with them,' and that they gave back to God the glory of those gifts which he had bestowed!

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, enable us to choose that good part which shall never be taken from us, not judging after the sight of the eyes, nor after the hearing of the ears, but considering that which will endure and be profitable to our imperishable souls; for what shall a man profit though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Forgive us, gracious Father, for having, in times past, gone too much along with the current of the world, as if our hopes and our inheritance were in this life only. Keep us from ever preferring the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, to the riches of Christ, which endure for ever. Incline us rather to suffer than to sin against thee, and to bear the reproach of Christ rather than to enjoy, without him, the smiles of the world. O grant that we may be amongst those of whom it may be said, as of David, The Lord is with them. Many there be who say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, and then shall we be happier than those whose corn and wine doth most abound. If thou art with us, whether in poverty or in wealth, in health or in sickness, it will be well with us, and even the afflictions of life will yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. We give thee thanks for thy goodness to us through the silent watches of the night, and for the soundness of mind, as well as health of body we now enjoy. We laid ourselves down, and slept, and awaked, for thou didst sustain us. Vouchsafe thy presence with us throughout the day. Uphold our steps in thy paths, and let not temptations prevail against us, and to thee shall be the glory of all our salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM xxxvii. 37.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN v. 1—24.

REMARKS.

'They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength,' says the prophet, 'they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.' To encourage us to wait on the Lord in prayer and not to faint, our

Lord spoke the parable of the importunate widow, who prevailed in obtaining at last her suit from one who neither feared God nor regarded man. How much more will a just and merciful God hear the cry of those who wait on him in prayer and supplication. The same instruction the narrative of the cure of the impotent man is fitted to impart. His infirmity had endured for thirty-eight years, and yearly was he brought, at the season of the troubling of the water, and laid in one of the porches of the pool. How often thrust aside by those who had friends at hand to assist them in the time of need; yet still he waits on, hoping even against hope, that some favourable opportunity may occur for him also, some kind friend aid his faltering steps, and give him the foremost place who had waited the longest. But a kinder and more powerful friend visited Bethesda, and rendered it in reality, as well as in name, to him a house of mercy. He to whose voice the diseases of the human frame were all subject, took pity on him, and said unto him, 'Rise, take up thy bed and walk; and immediately the man was made whole.' O that we had the same patience and perseverance, in seeking the health of our souls, as we have in seeking that of the body! How sensible to the least derangement of our bodily frame! how insensible to the greater disorders of our spiritual nature! If we fall into ill health of body, we repair to every individual of reputation; try every remedy; wait long and patiently; nay, will spend our all, like the woman in the gospel, upon the physicians, for the bare chance of being better: but how little care and anxiety whether the soul prospers or is in ill health, yea, though it becomes, by neglect, leaner and leaner from day to day, yet instead of waiting more faithfully on the means of grace, reading the word of God, and keeping alive private prayer, we gradually neglect these duties, and desert the house of mercy, and disuse the great means of drawing down heaven's blessing, prayer.

Observe the pharisaic comments of the Jews on the command to take up his bed on the sabbath. This is the censure of men ignorant of the spirit of religion, who preferred that bodily exercise which profiteth little, to that godliness which is profitable for all things. In these words we have also an impressive attestation to the divinity of the Lord Jesus. In the opinion of the Jews he made himself equal with God, an opinion which our Lord does not attempt to refute. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,' is his language. He also declares himself to be 'Judge;' yea, all judgment is committed to him. The Father raiseth the dead, and so doth the Son. The Son is to be honoured even as the Father. What language could convey more decisively the claims of Christ to be supreme God? Let us therefore honour him whom all the angels of heaven worship, and at whose feet the saints above cast their crowns.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most merciful Father, we adore thee as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom thou art reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing unto men their

trespasses. Thy tender mercy is above all thy works, for when there was no eye to pity us, and no hand to help, thine eye pitied and thy right arm wrought our salvation. Thou didst so love the world as to give thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but might have everlasting life. We believe in thy Son, Jesus Christ. We know of no name given under heaven by which there is salvation, but the name of Jesus. In that name alone we come this night into thy holy presence. Remember not, heavenly Father, what manner of creatures we are, but remember what Jesus, our great advocate and intercessor, is. Behold Christ, our shield. Look on the face of thine Anointed. By his humiliation on earth in our nature; by his labours and travail in behalf of the sons of men; by all his sufferings, known and unknown, we entreat forgiveness of our many and great iniquities. If thou, Lord, wert to mark our transgressions and reckon them up in order before thee, yea, if thou wert to call us to account for the sins even of any one day of our lives, which of us would be justified in thy sight? Thy law only searches our hearts and discovers our sins, but that justification which cometh not to any son of Adam by the deeds of the law, cometh to all that believe through the atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness of Immanuel. We put our trust under the shadow of his wings, and desire to be clothed on by his righteousness. We would go up through this wilderness, leaning on him as the beloved of our souls. Let thy Spirit take of the things of Christ and show them unto our souls, that our souls may go on from strength to strength, until we arrive in Zion at last. Enable us more and more to honour thy Son in our lives and conversation, maintaining a walk becoming the gospel. Carry on, by thy Spirit, the good work thou hast begun in any of our hearts, that we may grow up to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus, and that we may have increasing evidences in ourselves that we are thine by saving and sanctifying faith. Evermore defend us against the various temptations of life, and let thy grace be sufficient for us amidst all the vicissitudes of our changing lot. We thank thee for the goodness and mercy that have guarded our steps this day. Let thy good providence watch over us, and all that are near and dear to our hearts, through the silence of the night; and after the refreshing sleep of the night, revive us to the light and enjoyment of another day. And unto thee, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be glory, honour, and praise, world without end. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLIV.

SCRIPTURE—1 SAMUEL XVII.

REMARKS.

David was the Lord's chosen, and had been anointed with oil by the prophet Samuel, as designed in the divine decree to be the future monarch of Israel, the chosen people of God. 'The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.' Every part of his history shows him to have been led, and disciplined, and protected by a special providence, which yet always acted harmoniously with secondary causes. The reigning monarch being abandoned on account of his stubborn inattention to the divine commandments, by 'the Spirit of the Lord,' was henceforth subjected to a malignant agency, which preyed upon his reason, and threw his soul into dark despair. The musical skill of David was a successful medicine, and a healing balm to the diseased and troubled soul of Saul; and thus the youthful shepherd was suddenly transferred, not merely to the court, but to the immediate presence of the monarch himself, from whom he received special marks of favour. He soon, however, returned to the obscurity of his native village, and resumed the humble employment of tending his father's flocks.

In this chapter we find him introduced by providence to a wider stage of public distinction, where his actions, by drawing to himself the eyes of all his countrymen, at once paved the way for his future elevation. For the unknown and unpractised stripling became the sole champion of his country against the national enemy. The Holy Spirit has related the circumstances of the single combat between the Philistine giant, Goliath, and the young shepherd of Israel, most minutely. The two armies of the Philistines and of the tribes of Israel, the latter led by the king in person, are drawn forth in battle array, and both being posted upon two mountains which faced one another, are separated by a valley. Suddenly there stepped out of the Philistine ranks, Goliath of Gath, who, confiding in the enormous size and strength of his bodily frame, as well as in the solidity of his brazen coat of armour, challenged the armies of Israel to single combat. He exclaimed in the most arrogant terms, 'Give me a man, that we may fight together.' This challenge coming from one apparently invincible, spread consternation through all the ranks of Israel, and their stoutest-hearted warriors quailed and fled. The Philistine received no answer for forty days, in each of which he repeated his challenge, and notwithstanding the magnificent offers of the king, none could be induced even to try. At this critical conjuncture, help came from a quarter not calculated upon, either by friends or foes. Out of the mouth of a youth, God had ordained strength. The youth David, had been despatched by his affectionate father with a measure of provisions for the support of his three elder brothers, who were serving in the army, and just as he happened to arrive at the camp, he witnessed the universal terror which the sight and

words of the Philistine giant inspired among the mighty men of Israel. He felt the dishonour, chiefly because a profane idolator so arrogantly defied 'the armies of the living God.' In spite of the unkindly check which he received from his eldest brother, he expressed aloud his keen sense of the insult which was offered to the God of Israel, and when he was introduced into the presence of the king Saul, with mingled modesty and courage stated his reasons for offering to engage in apparently so unequal a combat. 'The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.' The issue of the combat we have just read.

The practical lesson which we may receive from this portion of David's history, may be found in its exemplification of the nature and power of faith, that strong stock upon which all the Christian graces must be grafted. Had David gone forth to the fearful odds, inspired merely by natural courage, we might have admired his valiant prowess, but could have discerned nothing for our imitation. He was guided and impelled, however, by that faith which is 'the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;' by that faith which had led his ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to live as 'pilgrims and strangers,' and which had led Moses not to fear 'the wrath of the king, as seeing him who is invisible.' Through faith then David 'subdued kingdoms, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to fight the armies of the aliens.' Though David engaged in the combat destitute of sword, and spear, and shield, yet he did not despise all means, he used his sling, and was fully equipped with the spiritual armour of hope and faith, and the promises which were to him the sword of the Spirit. The lesson is more profitable, for as every young man on engaging in the career of life may, like David, expect to meet obstacles sometimes so great that the minds of ordinary men are discouraged, let his soul be strengthened to meet the difficulty by living under the power of things unseen, things eternal, and things to come.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, we would unite our hearts to offer the tribute of our gratitude, because thou hast preserved us during the silent watches of the past night, and hast allowed us to see the light of a new day. Thy mercies are new to us every day. Therefore we will bless thy holy name. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forge not all his benefits; bless the Lord, O our souls, and remember his good and perfect gifts. We thank thee that thou hast made the Sun of righteousness to arise upon our benighted world, and remove the gross darkness which covereth the people. Thou hast given thy Son to be a light of the Gentiles. He is the light of the world; he that followeth him shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life. Send forth, O Lord, thy light and truth into our hearts, that we may not walk in the ignorance and carnality

of our fallen nature. Convince us of our sins, in their number, in their variety, in their aggravations, and in their fearful deserts. Convince us of our misery if we still lie under the condemnation of thy broken and despised law, exposed to the hot wrath and the sore displeasure of the living God; for who knoweth the power of his anger? Awaken us, if any now before thee are sunk in spiritual slumber, and let the arrows of conviction pierce the hearts which are at enmity with God, and are not subject to his law. Give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of thy Son Jesus Christ, that we may flee to him as the city of refuge, where we shall be for ever secured from the righteous claims of thy avenging justice; that we may enter his kingdom as an ark of safety, where we shall never be swallowed up by the floods and tempests of thy devouring wrath. Lord, save us; Lord, help us; Lord, have mercy upon us. Make our hearts what thou wouldst have them to be. Renew our wills, and assume the government of our dispositions, appetites, and affections. For thy Son's sake pardon our transgressions, and continue to us the guidance of thy free Spirit. We desire to go forth to the performance of our Christian duties this day in the spirit of faith, and with earnest endeavours after new obedience to thy holy will in all things. Lord, hear, and answer us, since all that we now ask is in the name of Jesus Christ, thy Son, and our Saviour. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM L.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN v. 25—47.

REMARKS.

There is nothing more mysterious than life; for, though man may observe the indications and sensible signs, both of its presence and absence, he cannot discover the vital principle itself. We originally receive it directly from 'the Father who hath life in himself.' It is therefore a divine product, requiring nought less than the omnipotent word of the Creator. But Jesus says, 'As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.' The Son therefore, by his inherent prerogative of giving life, proves himself divine, equal to the Father, for the creature has not life in himself. If natural life be formed by union between our soul and body, the Son gives us spiritual life by forming a union between our dead souls and the life-giving God. The resurrection of a soul dead in trespasses and sins, to the enjoyment of spiritual life, in the eyes of all who are truly enlightened, is far more marvellous

than the resurrection of the dead and decomposed body. The period during which the latter miracle took place, has long since past away, with the age of our Lord and his apostles, but thanks be to God, the former miracle which excites joy even in heaven is still performed. 'The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.' Spiritual life then, or a union between God and our soul 'cometh by hearing.' The disciples and others not a few, by hearing the voice of the Son of God, when he was in the days of his flesh, passed from death unto life; and as many since his ascension to heaven, as have listened to the voice of his faithful ministers, have also passed from death unto life. Let us hear that voice. The hour now is. If we are uncertain and in doubt as to the fact of our still requiring to seek spiritual life from Christ, let us examine whether we exhibit the signs and evidences of its presence. The consciousness of the union which has taken place between our souls and God may well dissipate the fears and apprehensions of our minds, with reference to the disunion which death causes between our soul and body, for we shall again hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth out of our dark graves to the light and life of an everlasting day. The resurrection on the last day will be universal, of them that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and of them that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

When our Lord was declaring these solemn and affecting doctrines, some of his hearers (as is still the case with many men), doubted of his divine mission. Our Lord therefore makes an exposition of several branches of the evidences of our holy religion. John the Baptist, a prophet of most eminent sanctity, revered by the great body of the Jewish nation, and predicted of even in the Old Testament, was sent expressly to forewarn the Jews of the Messiah's coming, and to prepare the way for his reception, by preaching the doctrine of repentance. This venerated prophet, whose claims to a divine commission were generally acknowledged by the Jews, bore the plainest testimony that Jesus was the long-promised Messiah. A testimony far more satisfactory is appealed to by our Saviour, in the performance of many mighty miracles. God also bore witness to the claims of Christ with signs and wonders, and miracles. Miraculous works assuredly constitute a divine attestation, and how many did our Lord perform to show that the Father had sent him! A third evidence, to be conjoined with the two former, is in the scriptures of the Old Testament, 'and they are they which testify of me.' In the typical economy of Moses, and in the clear predictions which he and the other prophets were inspired to utter, any humble and careful inquirer would have found, without difficulty, the marks to which Jesus exactly corresponded. Search the scriptures. Why is it that all this amount of evidence has not told upon vast numbers? It arises simply from the moral obstacles in their hearts; their undue preference of human praise; their dislike of the doctrines themselves, and their slavish subjection to corrupt passions. These, in all ages, have

been the real reasons which have prevailed against the clearest light.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, we again bow ourselves down at the footstool of thy throne, whence thou condescendest to regard the words of our petitions, our thanksgivings, and our confessions. The frailties and short comings which attend our very best efforts of obedience to thy will follow us in our prayers. Our confidence, therefore, in this, and every other approach which we make to a throne of grace, is not in ourselves, but is founded on the merits and finished work of Jesus Christ. His name is our confidence, that what we now ask we shall receive, and that what we seek, we shall find, and that when we knock, it shall be opened to us. At the close of another day, we would now entreat thy free forgiveness of the sins which we have committed, and entreat also thy gracious acceptance of our attempts to act in accordance with thy holy commandments. We gladly look upon Christ as the altar which alone sanctifies whatever either of will or of deed thy Spirit worketh in us of his good pleasure. For thy Son's sake, accept our persons, our works, and our supplications. Christ having redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, we desire henceforth to adopt thy law as the sole rule of our life and conduct. Lord, acquaint us with the exceeding breadth of thy commandments. By them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward. And let all now before thee know the blessedness of the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Let all of us know the blessedness of the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. Give us thy Spirit that we may be born again, that we may be God's workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. Let Christ be begotten in our hearts the hope of glory. Give us that faith whereby we may constantly and implicitly trust in Christ, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins. Give us our daily bread, guide all our steps, make all the events which may befall us in the course of our earthly pilgrimage to contribute to our spiritual welfare, and to thy glory. We resign ourselves to thy protection and care, while the shades of night rest upon our habitation, and our eyelids are closed in slumber. Lord, we entreat for all with whom we are connected by the endearing ties of blood and friendship. Let them and us be united for ever by the tie of

a common interest in the covenant of grace. Bless our native land in all its interests, civil and spiritual. Give wisdom to our rulers, that they may rule in the fear of the Lord. Let thy word penetrate to the most distant parts of the earth, and overthrow the habitations of darkness and horrid cruelty. Uphold thy church wherever it is established in the earth. And now, Lord, hear, and accept our prayers, since all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 4.

SCRIPTURE—1 SAMUEL XVIII.

REMARKS.

By his illustrious achievement in the combat with Goliath of Gath, David was launched out into life, apparently with the most favourable omens. He very speedily found, however, what most of men learn only by actual experience, that human life is a troubled sea, and that the most cautious and most prudent management will not save us from the trying dangers of tempests and quicksands, of sunken rocks and deceitful calms. This is eminently true of greatness of station. Public life has been generally supposed unfavourable to the acquisition of friends, one of the rarest blessings of life. 'There is a friend,' says the wise man, 'that sticketh closer than a brother.' Never was this observation more fully illustrated among mere men than in the friendship which Jonathan, the son of Saul, contracted with David, the son of Jesse. It was not the slow result of long-continued intimacy. It was formed from the very first moment the two parties saw one another, and seemed to have arisen from the inexplicable law of sympathy. How beautiful the description, 'The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.' Though Jonathan was most sudden in his attachment, he was neither capricious nor forgetful; though the two parties were very different in rank, the one being the son of a king, and the other being the son of a shepherd, it did not hinder the equality which is so essential to true friendship, and the pledges which the two parties exchanged were never broken. Both of them were in that period of youth which seems most favourable to the contracting the permanent alliances of friendship. We cannot help observing that of the two, Jonathan impresses us most favourably, both as to disinterestedness, from his superior rank, and as to the many and sincere proofs of sincerity and faithfulness which he afterwards showed to his friend. The kindly feelings which, as followers of the Friend of sinners, we ought to cherish towards all men, are not at all incompatible with strong preferences to particular individuals. David truly required a friend at court for the king began soon to contract a most violent and implacable enmity to him, arising from hateful jealousy of his fame and success. 'And the women

answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands.' Saul regarded, henceforth, his brave subject with an evil eye, and with his own hand twice attempted to assassinate the man that had so late saved his country from defeat and dishonour. The Lord was a shield to his servant, and turned aside the weapon. Finding open violence unsuccessful, Saul next attempted circumvention and treachery. He put David into a responsible situation, in which the latter, being guilty of imprudence or misconduct, might become liable to punishment; and next imposed perilous services against the national enemy, in fighting with whom David might possibly be slain. But Saul was fighting, as he himself clearly saw, not against man, but against God. Neither his open hostility nor his secret snares were successful. In spite of all his opposition, David increased in acceptance with the men of Judah and Israel, gained additional laurels in his combat with the Philistines, of whom he slew two hundred men, became the object of affection to Michal, the daughter of the king, who was reluctantly obliged to bestow her hand upon his hated rival. One of the chiefest obstacles to our success in life, and one of the strongest temptations to sinful conduct, arises from rivalry and competition. We are apt, in consequence, to be betrayed into despondency or exultation, into jealousy or envy. Let us then constantly remember that it is God's sovereign right to exalt and to abase, and that it is our duty, if exalted, to rejoice with trembling, and if beaten, nay, far excelled by our fellows, to submit with cheerfulness. Thus our breasts will not harbour either pride nor envy. Let us endeavour, like David, that we behave ourselves wisely in all our ways, and that the Lord be with us, and then we will go on our way rejoicing.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, who art seated on a throne, high and lifted up, we again direct our supplications and thanksgivings to the place where thine honour dwelleth. We thank thee that thou art seated on a throne of mercy, whither we may come in the name of Christ, not merely with confidence, but with great boldness. Thou art merciful and gracious to forgive us our iniquities, thou art just and faithful also to forgive us our sins. We adore, with reverence, and wonder, and gratitude, that unsearchable wisdom which has made the claims of justice consistent with the entreaties of mercy, and has harmonized thy hatred of sin with the free forgiveness of sinners. O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! We receive Christ as thy unspeakable gift. We rejoice in his appointment to be the Mediator between God and man. We acquiesce in all the arrangements of the covenant of grace. Our prayer is that thou wouldst enrich our poor, and naked, and empty souls with the fulness of the spiritual blessings which are laid up in Jesus Christ, our invisible

Head. If there be aught good in us, it dwelleth not in us by nature, for in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing; it arises from the working of thy good Spirit, who in Christ Jesus is granted to all his people for their instruction, and sanctification, and rich comfort. But, heavenly Father, even when thy sanctifying grace has been conferred upon us, to enable and fit us for our daily obedience, we still feel our need of thy forgiving grace. Look upon us in the face of thine Anointed, and not as we are in ourselves. May thy Spirit sprinkle our polluted consciences with the peace-speaking blood of Christ, and clothe our persons, naked of all merit, with the unspeakable merits of Christ, who is the Lord our righteousness; and then, being justified by faith, we shall have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, we desire to please thee by our actions and thoughts during this day. And when, by thy watchful and merciful providence, we again unite our praise and prayers this evening, may we find that we have denied ourselves, that we have taken and carried Christ's cross, and have followed him. We would no longer live the rest of our time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God, which is our sanctification. Help us, Lord, henceforth to have, through Christ Jesus, our affections, and conversation, and treasure in heaven, where Christ our Saviour is, and where, after our death, we humbly hope ever to be with him. Take our country, our rulers, our friends, and our enemies, under thy special protection. Pour out thy promised Spirit upon thy visible church. May its bounds soon extend to the ends of the earth, and may thine ancient people recognise Jesus of Nazareth to be the true Messiah. Look in mercy upon the sick, the afflicted, and the dying. And now, Lord, accept our persons and prayers, since all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM L. 7.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN VI. 1—40.

REMARKS.

Men engage in the service of Christ Jesus with mixed motives. If good motives, as well as good ends alone, prompted men to become members of the visible church, the mere fact of being within its pale would be sufficient to impart confidence toward God in a man. As, however, purity and simplicity of intention are found only in a portion of Christ's followers, it becomes absolutely necessary to

draw, and to make known the lines of distinction. Our Saviour was tabernacled beside the sea of Galilee, and a great multitude followed him. From what motive? 'Because they saw his miracles.' Curiosity to behold unusual and marvellous spectacles, chiefly, if not altogether, prompted them to go in the train, and to follow the steps, of Jesus; and we do not reckon uncharitably of many men in our own day, that the desire of gratifying the mere love of novelty has led them to wait upon some of the faithful ministers of Christ. While this constitutional impulse of our minds cannot be excluded, even from the most simple-hearted Christian, it may exclusively act upon the minds of many ungodly and wicked men. Let us beware of it, as our only motive. Our Lord's conduct is worthy of our careful imitation, for he gave thanks to the Almighty before he distributed to the multitude; for, while the most simple refreshment both supplies an opportunity and an incentive to the acknowledgment of God's bounteous providence, how often is it that this acknowledgment is omitted or refused even where God's natural bounties are spread out in the greatest profusion. Jesus commanded the fragments to be collected 'that nothing might be lost.' This might be intended to make the miracle more evident to the eyes of the beholders, but it seems chiefly intended to inculcate the lesson, that the profusion of God's natural bounties does not justify either our waste or prodigality. Our Lord did not accept the earthly crown which the multitude here offered him, just as he rejected an earthly kingdom with which satan had at first tempted him. Had this multitude been wise and truly grateful, they would have offered instead the government of their hearts to Jesus, as their spiritual king, and would not have met the rejection of their offering. But if Christ left the multitude, because they would not apprehend his spiritual claims, his true disciples will meet him and enjoy his society even when their souls are most sunk in dejection, and are contending with the restless fluctuations of doubt. Just as the disciples beheld their Lord walking on the billows of the sea, and felt assured upon hearing his accustomed voice, so in many a scene of danger and perplexing trial he has supported and comforted the minds of his people of every age. 'It is I, be not afraid.'

The multitude, as soon as they found that Jesus, declining the honour which they had offered, had retired to another spot, sought him with an earnestness of perseverance which seemed to indicate the security and strength of their attachment to religion. They dealt with one, however, who judges the heart. They found their real motives in seeking his society at once exposed. It was from earthly and selfish reasons alone that they were putting on the badges of piety. 'Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.' Though the service of Christ may expose us to disadvantages, losses, and mortifications, we should remember, that as a Christian profession may not seldom conciliate respect, and gain us secular advantages from the prevalence of true religion in society, we are bound to examine the purity of our motives with greater strictness of self-scrutiny. For

assuredly the Son of man came to give us, not 'the meat which perisheth,' but 'that meat which endureth unto life everlasting.' For its acquisition we should labour with our whole hearts 'to do the will of God.' In doing this divine work, we are to look with faith to him who has finished the work which the Father gave him to do.' In considering and depending upon this work, we will find a new and spiritual life communicated to our souls, until at last we will clearly understand how Christ is the true bread of life, which was only shadowed forth by that miraculous manna which sustained the Israelites during their journey in the wilderness. If this alleged quality of Christ and his doctrine, to impart a new and everlasting life to the souls of men, startle us and be heard with incredulity, let us understand that, though we may not choose to come to Christ for everlasting life, he will still receive an affectionate and believing people; and that the Father will not allow his benignant intentions to mankind to be frustrated. Those whom Christ hath received for his people from the Father, will still come unto him, and will believingly depend upon him, that they may have everlasting life, and may be raised up at the last day. Let us, then, not turn away with disrelish from the Lord's offer, but say, from the bottom of our hearts, 'Lord, evermore give us this bread.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, we now adore thy mercy, because while the shades of night are descending upon us and our habitations, thou hast not left us to the darkness of our natural minds. We fully know thy will for our salvation, that we should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. May he then be made of God, unto each of us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. We confess that we often act unworthily of our Christian privileges, and often act inconsistently with our high calling. Our faith fails us, our watchfulness against sin intermits, our affections become cold and languid, and our imaginations wander to forbidden scenes. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. Whither shall we go but unto thee, for thou hast the words of life eternal? Draw us, Lord, and we shall run after thee. Draw us with the cords of a man, and with bands of love. Make us a willing people in this day of thy power. Send forth thy light and truth into our hearts, and let us experience the enlightening and purifying, the sanctifying and comforting influences of thy word. Make our wayward wills conformable to thine, that we all may do thy will on earth, as it is done in heaven. We desire now, Lord, that thou wouldest forgive the sins which we have committed this day, and that thou wouldest not take thy Holy Spirit from us. We place our dependence upon the merits and

intercession of Christ the righteous, who is our advocate with the Father, and who is the propitiation for our sins. Let the same spirit which was in him, be also in us. Engrave his precepts and commandments upon our hearts, until we become living epistles of the Lord Jesus, known and read of all men. We would now commit ourselves to thy protection during the coming night. Our friends we commend to thy guardianship. Let us and them be more closely united, by being all partakers of Christ's redemption. Look mercifully upon our country and its rulers. Let the church of God be established, and let it extend its bounds to the remotest regions of the earth. And now, heavenly Father, grant us exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think, since all that we ask is for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRaise—PSALM IX. 7.

SCRIPTURE—I SAMUEL XIX.

REMARKS.

The fame of David, on account of his exploits, had become so great in Israel, that Saul's jealousy was kindled against him. He regarded every mark of honour paid to the son of Jesse, as disrespectful to himself, and calculated to lessen him in the eyes of his people. On this account did he form the purpose of putting him to death, and in order to accomplish it, communicated his purpose to Jonathan and his servants. The affectionate Jonathan informed his friend of his father's intention, and at the same time, offered to act the part of an intercessor, in order, if possible, to bring about a reconciliation. With this view did he, having communicated his plan to David, meet his father, in a place to which it seems to have been his custom frequently to retire, and there did he reason with him on the impropriety of his conduct towards one who had acted the part of a most faithful servant, who had been ever ready to expose his life to the greatest danger on his master's account, and who, in successfully attacking and slaying the Philistine, had been instrumental, in the hand of God, in working out a great salvation for all Israel. Jonathan was successful. He overcame his father's anger, and David, who had been concealed near the place of interview, was once more brought by his affectionate friend into the presence of Saul, and apparently restored to his favour.

Another war, however, broke out between the children of Israel and the Philistines. David again buckled on his armour, and again triumphed over the enemies of Israel, which again kindled the jealousy of Saul, and although he had sworn to Jonathan that David should not be slain, yet so regardless was he of his oath, that while the faithful David

did not desist from his master's service, while he even played with his harp as on former times, Saul, who sat with a javelin in his hand, aimed a blow at his faithful servant, from which he narrowly escaped. So intent was Saul on David's destruction, that he even sent messengers to his house to watch their opportunity of securing him. It was in consequence of the affectionate conduct of his wife, who either feared or had learned her father's intention, that David made his escape. The subsequent stratagems which she used to deceive her father, although it is not necessary to justify every part of her conduct, afforded her husband an opportunity of removing himself completely from the reach of Saul and his messengers. The whole narrative, as here given, illustrates the great danger to which David was exposed, and the savage cruelty of the king, who, not contented to wait the issue of his supposed affliction, desired the satisfaction of putting his faithful servant to death with his own hand. David, on his escape from Saul, fled for protection to Samuel the prophet, who had previously anointed him as king, with whom he retired to Naioth, in which, it is supposed, there was a seminary of prophets. Saul having heard of the retreat of David, sent messengers to lay hold of him, doubtless with the view of putting him to death. These messengers, however, no sooner reached the company of prophets than they were inspired of God with their spirit, and remained prophesying along with them. A second and a third party being similarly inspired, acted in the same manner; and even Saul himself, who afterwards followed his messengers to Naioth, became in the way possessed of the same spirit, so that he also, when he reached the place, took off his upper garments, probably his armour and his royal robes, and, to the astonishment of all, performed his part among the prophets of the Lord, as he had done on a former occasion.

How engaging is true friendship! what difficulties does it encounter! to what dangers does it expose itself, and with what patience does it watch for the benefit of the beloved individual! How unreasonable is envious anger! How dangerous to indulge in it! The more excellent the character against whom it is conceived, the more bitter does it generally become, and when it once takes root in the mind, how difficult to overcome it! With what care therefore should we guard against its first risings, lest, if indulged in, we should allow the sun to go down upon our wrath.

How anxiously does the mind of man in the hour of trouble or of danger seek for protection, or comfort, or assistance in the ordinances of God, and the society of his people! How great is the influence which these exercise over the mind! But let us beware lest, in having recourse to them, it should be only for a time. For how many are there who, when the danger is over, return to their former carelessness; who although in the society of the prophets they seem animated with their spirit, on their return to the world, mingle in all its unmeaning and its sinful enjoyments, whose goodness is like the morning cloud, and the early dew, which soon pass away?

PRAYER.

Almighty and most merciful Father, we would approach the footstool of thy throne, with that reverence which becometh us as creatures, and that humility which becometh us as sinful creatures. We adore thee on account of thy great and glorious majesty. We bless thee on account of that goodness which thou makest continually to pass before us. Thine is the air we breathe, thine the food we eat, thine the raiment we wear, thine the earth we tread, thine are all the blessings of social intercourse, the comforts of domestic life, with every thing which tends to sweeten the cup of human enjoyment. Thy people thou keepest as the apple of thine eye, preserving them amid all the snares of the wicked, and giving them deliverance. But while we bless thee for those things which perish with the using, we bless thee above all for Jesus Christ, thine unspeakable gift. Herein indeed, is love, not that we have loved God, but that he hath loved us, and sent his Son to save us. What are we, O God, that thou shouldest thus be mindful of us; what is our father's house, that thou shouldest thus visit us? We are the children of a day, the feeble insects of an hour; we are a people laden with iniquity. Our fathers have sinned, and we their children have borne their transgression. From the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, there is no soundness in us. If thou, O Lord, shouldest mark iniquity against us, who of us could stand? but with thee there is forgiveness, that thou mayest be feared, and plenteous redemption, that thou mayest be sought after. We come to thee in the name of our great High Priest. We accept of the gift of eternal life, through faith in his blood. Enable us ever to evince the heavenly origin of our faith, by its purifying the heart, and working by love, and producing those peaceable fruits of righteousness which are to thy praise, and honour, and glory. Let the same mind be in us which dwelt in our blessed Master. Like him, may we delight in retiring from the world to hold communion with the God of heaven. Like him, may we rejoice in those opportunities which are offered us for going about doing good to our fellow-men, while we study, at all times, to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, and by a careful continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality. We desire this morning to give thee thanks for thy protecting care during the night, for the sweet and refreshing rest we have enjoyed, and for the comfortable circumstances in which we are permitted once more to assemble around the

family altar. Be with us, O Lord, to aid us in our duty this day, in our going out and coming in, in our rising up and sitting down. In all our ways we would acknowledge thee. Do thou, Lord, direct our steps. Every day of our lives, may we become more conformable with thy blessed will, more prepared for thy service upon earth, and the enjoyment of thee in heaven. And when the purposes of thy providence with us on earth are finished, may an abundant entrance be administered to us, into thy kingdom and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN VI. 41—71.

REMARKS.

However much accustomed to figurative language, the Jews could not comprehend our Lord's meaning when he styled himself 'the bread of life.' Ignorant of his pre-existence, they were equally at a loss to understand Him when he spoke of his having come down from heaven, and of his appearance on earth being of as much importance to the spiritual life of mankind, as bread is to the natural. Hence their murmurings. Our Saviour, aware of the opposition given by the proud and carnal nature of man, to the humbling and spiritual doctrine of the gospel, reminds his audience of the necessity of divine assistance to the implanting of the principle of faith in the human heart; for that 'coming unto Christ,' as well as 'being drawn to him,' is an expression signifying faith in the Son of God, is evident from the 35th verse of this chapter. The gospel finds none willing to embrace it, but God makes his people willing in the day of his power. He enlightens the mind, renews the will, and elevates the affections, so that the enlightened understanding discerns, the renewed will chooses, and the elevated affections cling to the things that be of God. The person thus persuaded to come to him, Christ promises to raise up at the last day, in which he affirms of the individual thus drawn to him the same thing which he had before affirmed of the believer in the 40th verse,—an additional proof of the import of 'being drawn to Christ.'

In the 48th verse, our Saviour again speaks of himself as the bread of life, and declares the great superiority of this bread to the manna which the Jews did eat in the wilderness.

Our Lord who was well acquainted with the thoughts of his audience, knew that they murmured because he spoke of his coming down from heaven, and of his being the bread of life. But what, he inquires at them, would be their thoughts, were they to witness the confirmation of what he had said, in his ascension to the place from which he declared he had descended? It is true, that the human na-

ture of the Saviour had not been previously in heaven. But being both God and man, he is, without particular discrimination, called either the Son of God, or the Son of man; and in consequence of this indissoluble union, that mysterious person may be spoken of as having come down from heaven. Thus does our Saviour show that his kingdom is not of this world, while he reminds his hearers that they are to understand his discourse regarding the eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood, not in a gross or carnal sense, but in that of living spiritually by him, partaking by faith of that fulness which is treasured up in him.

Notwithstanding the patience of Jesus Christ, in his instructions to his audience, the spiritual nature of his discourse was either not understood, or not relished by many among them, and on that account did they go back and walk no more with him. Peter, however, in name of the twelve, on an appeal being made to them, by their divine Master, declares his firm faith in him, and his determination to adhere to his cause. On this bold and honourable confession, our Lord acquainted his apostles with the fact, that although he had chosen twelve, one of them was a devil, by which he teaches all his followers the propriety of answering each for himself, while he gives the traitor to understand, that however little he might be inclined to believe it, his character was well known to him with whom he had to do.

When we hear of the murmurings of our Lord's hearers, and of many of them altogether forsaking him, on account of the spiritual nature of his doctrine, Christian teachers need not be surprised if their hearers should not relish the heavenly truths which they inculcate, or if in the discharge of duty they should meet with reproach or persecution.

Is Jesus Christ the bread of life which came down from heaven, and which is necessary to the support of our spiritual existence? let us partake of that heavenly food which is thus provided for us: in other words, let us ever live by faith upon the Son of God, realizing him in all our actions, and seeing him who is invisible in all his ordinances. And then when he who is our life appears, we also shall appear with him in glory.

Is the Spirit of God necessary to render effectual the instruction of his word? let both those who teach, and those who are taught, implore of God all necessary aid, and then may it be expected that by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the truth as it is in Jesus will be made effectual for salvation.

Is it in Jesus alone that salvation is to be found? Let us, while others are pursuing their vanities and lies, ever cleave to him as all our salvation and all our desire.

In fine, was there in the little circle of the chosen followers of Christ, one who was a devil? Let us search our hearts, and try our reins, lest, with a name to live, we should be found to be dead, or with a form of religion we should be destitute of its power. 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.'

PRAYER.

We desire, O Lord, this evening, to bow the

knee before thee, in humble adoration of thy glorious perfections, and while we would return thee our most grateful acknowledgments, for that goodness which has hitherto followed us, and particularly for those renewed proofs of it we have this day experienced, we would with deep prostration of heart confess our unworthiness of the least of all thy mercies. For which of thy commandments have we not broken? which of thy precepts have we not trampled upon? If we say we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves, and make God a liar, for he hath declared that there is none righteous, no, not one. We feel, O Lord, the truth of thy declaration. Our hearts condemn us, and how much more must he who is greater than our hearts, he who knoweth all things, in whose eyes the heavens themselves are not pure, and who chargeth even his angels with folly. With deep humility would we confess before thee our transgressions, earnestly imploring pardon through the blood of thine only begotten and well-beloved Son, of him who when rich became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich. Of thee may he be made unto us wisdom, and knowledge, and sanctification, and redemption, and may we, renewed by the influences of his blessed Spirit, be enabled to abound in all those fruits of righteousness which are to the praise and the glory of God. We rejoice that he is proclaimed to us as the bread of life, of which if we eat, we shall never perish. May we then be partakers of this living bread, and eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, may we now have life in us, and through him be raised up at the last day. But at the same time, may we ever bear in mind that it is the Spirit who quickeneth, and that it is the words which the Saviour hath spoken, that are spirit and life. May we, then, ever prove that his word dwelleth in us, by the whole tenor of our life and conversation. God forbid that we should be among the number who with a name to live, are yet dead in their sins, or with a form of religion, are strangers to its power. God forbid, that while we profess to follow the Saviour now, we should hereafter go back and walk no more with him. Rather let us, with our faces towards Zion, ever move onward in our Christian course, experiencing the blessedness of the man whose sins are pardoned, and whose iniquities are remembered no more; of him who, having put his hand to the plough never looketh back; of him, whose path is like the morning light, which shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day; and then when he who is our life appears, we also shall appear

with him in glory. We desire to commit to thee the keeping of our souls this night, as to a faithful Creator. Do thou who slumberest not nor sleepest, preserve us from all evil; give us the sleep of thy beloved, and when we awake may we still be with thee. If spared to open our eyes to the light of a new day, may we rise with gratitude for thy preserving care, and with minds determined to enter upon the duties of a new day, with a single eye to the glory of that God whose we are, and whom we are ever bound to serve. Hear our prayers, O Lord, forgive our sins, and accept of us in Jesus the Beloved. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—I SAMUEL XXVIII.

REMARKS.

In consequence of the persecutions of Saul, David had fled to Achish, king of Gath, who bestowed on him, as a possession, Ziklag, a town which the Philistines had formerly seized, but which, in this manner, came again into the hands of the Israelites. There David dwelt when Achish resolved to make war with the children of Israel: and on forming this resolution he applied to David to accompany him to battle. The son of Jesse, doubtless, unwilling to fight against his own countrymen, yet fearing to offend his benefactor, gave the reply contained in the second verse; which, although an evasive answer, given, probably, to gain time, Achish understood, or pretended to understand, as a promise of effectual assistance, for he immediately promised him preferment in his kingdom.

Saul in his present troubles wickedly resolved to seek that assistance from a creature which was denied him by the Creator; denied him because it was sought for merely under the influence of terror, and without faith, or humility, or repentance.

The most probable opinion on the subject of the woman of Endor is, that God here was pleased to interpose to confound the machinations of this impious woman, in her attempt to impose upon the king, and with this view did he send Samuel himself, with the message, which he here delivers to Saul. This message contains a declaration of God's displeasure with the conduct of the king of Israel, and of his having on that account taken from him his kingdom, and given it to David, with a prediction of the death of Saul and of his sons; which, according to the prediction, took place on the following day.

We need not be surprised at the alarmed state of the mind of the king on hearing of his awful doom. Forsaken of God, and without the consolation which he expected from the prophet, he is left with none but the witch of Endor to offer him the words of comfort. We read of no acknowledgment of trans-

gression on his part, no offering of sacrifice, no supplication of any description whatever. But without any action indicative of his own repentance, or of sorrow for the doom of his family, he seems to have rushed on to his destruction.

How dangerous is it to cultivate the society of the ungodly, or to deviate in any way from the path of duty! One false step leads on to another, and evil communication corrupts good manners. There is a danger of either proving unfaithful to God, or seeming ungrateful to our benefactors. The best defence of a land is, under God, the presence of the faithful. When they fail from among men, the wicked become bold, the enemy is encouraged in his hostile attacks. How inconsistent is the hypocrite; at one time denouncing idolatry (for what is the consultation of diviners of any kind but a species of this kind?) and afterwards having recourse to those very means which he formerly denounced, vainly expecting that information from an idol, which God, in his wise providence, had refused to impart! How many are there among us who despise the servants of the living God, and the ordinances of our religion, while continued with them, who after their removal would fain have recourse to them for advice or consolation. But, alas, they apply in vain. The voice which warned them is heard no more, the light which shone around them has been removed, the misimproved day of mercy has gone past, and their salvation has not been effected. Let us, brethren, ponder such considerations, and let them lead us now to value our privileges; to listen to the faithful messenger; to receive the truth in the love of it, to walk in it continually.

PRAYER.

Our Father who art in heaven, listen, we beseech thee, to our humble prayers, while, on the morning of a new day, we would approach thee in the attitude of children, and with the confidence of those who draw near to a Father both able and willing to help them. But how shall we approach the God of heaven and of earth? Alas, we have sinned, and are not worthy so much as to lift up our eyes to the place where thine honour dwelleth. How many are the blessings we have abused—how many the privileges we have misimproved! We have despised the counsels of the righteous; we have stood in the way of the sinner. Truly, O Lord, we are unworthy to be called by the name of children. But although we be unworthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain for us, and blessed be thy name, that his blood cleanseth from all sin, and that thou art in him reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. We are therefore encouraged to come to thee by him; in his name to make known to thee our wants, and through him to look to thee as our reconciled God and Father, to call thee Abba, Father, and to implore of thee those blessings which thou dispensest to thy chosen. We thank thee, on

the present occasion, for thy goodness during the night watches, for the sweet and refreshing rest we have enjoyed, and for the comfortable circumstances of health and strength in which we are permitted once more to surround the family altar. We would implore thy blessing on the head of each of us now before thee; and in whatever capacity we are placed, and however connected with each other, whether as husband or wife, parent or child, brother or sister, master or servant, enable us to discharge aright each the duties of his station. May we remember our responsibility to thee, and so conduct ourselves as we shall wish to have done when called to render in our account. With ourselves we would pray for the parish and congregation with which we are more immediately connected. May our pastors be faithful, and may the people grow up as willows by the water courses, with minds seasoned with the truth as it is in Jesus. Revive religion among us, and may many, from time to time be found seeking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, We are journeying to the place of which thou hast said, I will give it thee. We pray for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, and for the approach of that blessed period, when Jew and Gentile, bond and free, shall be brought within the bonds of the everlasting covenant; when all shall know thee, from the least even unto the greatest, and when thou shalt have forgiven all their iniquities. With the sick and the afflicted would we unite our tender sympathy. We would especially pray for any in whom we may feel more immediate interest. Send them, we beseech thee, help from thy holy habitation. Prepare the dying for their departure hence. Spare useful lives, and let spared lives be devoted to thy service. Comfort all who mourn; pour the balm of consolation into the troubled breast, and uphold the bowed down. Now, O Lord, we look for thy guidance and direction throughout this day. Be at our right hand and at our left, that we may not be greatly moved. Lead us not into temptation. Deliver us from evil. Conduct us in the way everlasting, and bring us at last to thy kingdom and glory. For all that we would ask or expect is for the Redeemer's sake, to whom, with Father and Eternal Spirit, be all the praise, world without end. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LXVII. 4.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN VII. 1—27.

REMARKS.

How inconsistent the conduct of the Jewish rulers! Professing to honour Moses, they transgressed an important precept of his law, by seeking Christ's destruction. They condemned him because he performed a cure on the Sabbath day; a work in accordance with the law of love, which is of eternal and immutable obligation; while they justified themselves in the performance of the rite of circumcision on the day of holy rest, when it happened to be the eighth from the birth of the child, although in accordance with the ceremonial law, which was only of temporary obligation. Hence our Saviour's command to beware of judging from prejudice or external appearances, to look more narrowly into the law of God, and the nature of his precepts, that they might learn to judge righteously.

From the conduct of Jesus towards the people of Judea who sought his life, we ought to take a warning, lest, by our rejection of him, he should be induced to forsake us, to remove the candlestick out of its place, and to leave us to the consequences of our unbelief.

In our Lord's attendance on the stated feasts of the Jews, we behold an example worthy of our imitation. Let it then be our great object to follow it, in our observance of all the ordinances of our holy faith.

In the incredulity of our Saviour's nearest kinsmen, we see of how little avail the greatest external advantages prove, without the divine blessing. Let none, then, trust to their descent from pious parents, or their being members of religious families; but let such be the more careful in watching against those worldly prejudices from which even the brethren of our Lord were not exempted.

In the prudence of our Saviour, and his care to avoid persecution and danger till his time was come, we are taught a lesson of self-preservation, that it is our duty, by every wise and prudent precaution, to prolong our lives for farther usefulness.

In the treatment of our Lord by his countrymen, in his being not only exposed to, but actually meeting with unjust censure, we need not be surprised if our lot should not be unsimilar. It is enough if the disciple be as his master, the servant as his lord. In such circumstances let us endeavour to possess our souls in patience, and ever to imitate the example of him who, when persecuted, threatened not, when reviled, reviled not again.

In all our actions let us remember him who sought not his own, but his Father's glory: and let us study to do all to the praise of him whose we are, and whom we are ever bound to serve.

Let us ever bear in mind that integrity and uprightness will preserve us from dangerous mistakes in religion, and that if we improve the light that is given us, more will be imparted, and the experience of the power of the gospel on our hearts

will not fail to check our evil passions, and to destroy the prejudices which would otherwise prevent the growth of religion within us.

When we think of the attestation of our Saviour's character by his miracles and his teaching, we ought to receive his doctrine, and ever to bear in mind the importance of attention to both positive and moral duty, giving to the latter that preference over the former which our Saviour taught us to observe.

In the opinion of our Saviour's character here expressed by the Jews, do we see the confidence of error, and the vanity of self-applause. The mistaken people condemn their rulers for a supposed credulity, in appearing to admit the claim of Jesus to be the Messiah, while they boast of their own wisdom in rejecting him; blindly taking it for granted he was the son of Joseph. From this ought we to learn to be humble and diffident of our own opinion, while we weigh well those arguments by which any would induce us to rest our salvation on another foundation than that which the gospel inculcates. 'For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'

PRAYER.

Most holy and ever blessed God, we desire this evening to draw near thee in the all-prevailing name of our great High Priest, with whom thou art ever well pleased, and through whom thou art ever ready to dispense the choicest of thy blessings to those who ask in faith. Thou art our God, and we will bless thee, our fathers' God, and we will exalt thee. Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst hear their cry; we their children, who have risen up in their stead, would approach thee, the God of our fathers, rejoicing in thy promise to be the God of their children, and of their children's children, even to the latest generation of them that seek thee. But alas, O God, what reason have we to blush and be ashamed when we take thy holy name into our sinful and polluted lips? Our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. We have rolled sin as a sweet morsel under our tongue, and our most holy actions have been stained with guilt. In approaching thee, O most merciful God, we would lay our hand as on our mouth, and our mouth as in the dust, and we would say, God be merciful to us sinners. Enter not into judgment with us, for in thy sight no flesh living can be justified. Look not on us as we are in ourselves; for we are all as an unclean thing before thee. But look upon us, O Lord, in the face of Jesus thine anointed. For his sake, come over the multitude of our provocations; receive us graciously, love us freely; create us anew unto good works, and enable us henceforward to abound in the fruits of righteousness, which are, through Jesus Christ, to thy praise, and honour, and glory. We desire to

glory in nothing but the cross of Christ, by which we are crucified unto the world, and the world unto us. While we look to the Saviour as the foundation of all our hopes, we desire to imitate him in all his imitable perfections, and to grow in conformity with his blessed image. But alas, O God, we feel our weakness; for when we would do good, evil is present with us, and how to perform that which is good, we know not. To thee, therefore, would we look for that assistance of which we stand in need. Let thy Spirit help our infirmities. May he dwell in us richly, renewing our wills, purifying our affections, elevating our desires, and drawing out our whole souls after thee, and the remembrance of thy name. And in whatever circumstances of life we are placed, may we be enabled to evince the temper and disposition of those who are born from above. In prosperity, may we acknowledge the hand that feeds us, and makes our cup to overflow; in adversity may we bow with filial submission before the rod of a Father who afflicteth not willingly, nor grieveth his children, but for their good. In health may we devote our better days to thy service, and in sickness have cause to say, It is good for us to be afflicted. While we live, may we live to thee, and when we come to die, may we resign our spirits into the hands of him who gave them, in the humble hope of a blessed and a glorious resurrection; and at last, may we all appear, being gathered one after another, as a family, before thy throne, there to serve thee for evermore. We give thee thanks for thy goodness throughout another day, and again would we implore thy protection during the slumbers of the night. May our meditations on thee be sweet during the night watches; and if spared to see the light of a new day, may we rise from our beds of rest with our bodies refreshed, our hearts full of gratitude to the Author of every good and every perfect gift, and our minds more than ever determined, that whatever others do, as for us we will serve the Lord; and grant that, advancing from one degree of heavenly attainment to another, we may all at last come, in the unity of the faith, in the bond of love, to serve thee in thy kingdom of glory, and the praise shall be thine for ever, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLIX. 16.

SCRIPTURE—1 SAMUEL XXXI.

REMARKS.

1. 'Nay; if one came from the dead, we must repent,' thinks many a heart. But a spirit communed with Saul, from amid the clouds of another world, and told him he was on the eve of battle and of death. Yet scarce have two days passed away (chap. xviii. 19.) when, as if in mockery of the omen, he rushes to the battle-field, and courts in arms the vengeance he should have deprecated on his knees; neither is it then in truth itself, nor in the vehicle which conveys it, that the energy resides; but its success depends on its being brought into such contact with the mind as that it must be realized and felt. I may receive information which involves my dearest interests, and receive it from a spirit of glory or of darkness; notwithstanding, unless my heart be set in order to view, and appreciate, and embrace it, by one who has access to all its chambers, not even its meanest spring will vibrate. 'It is the spirit who quickeneth.'

2. We cannot but mourn for Jonathan, and are almost astonished to find one like him among either the soldiers or victims of this dishonourable field. Yet, at the same time, we rejoice to think that filial love would be his motive, and that he, who saw meet to ordain his early departure, would take care that even with his 'garments rolled in blood,' he should die in peace. Our connections too, may place us in circumstances that bring life to a premature and painful close, and subject our memory to suspicion. But whatever be our reproach, let us maintain the integrity of all our relations; and though we should die in circumstances that lead men to tremble for us, God himself will cheer our latter end, and give us afterwards 'our resting-place in glory.' 'There be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked.'

3. Saul had been always vain, and at the end we find him not caring what contempt may await him in the world of retribution; but, in the spirit of appalling vanity, still concerned only for what men may do to him, and urging the sword into his own heart, rather than be the scorn of his foes. But the same nature is in us that was in him, and no unregenerated man can tell how soon he may thrust his spirit upon a dark eternity, under the influence of wounded pride or mortified ambition.

4. No man can tell for what an amount of wickedness his example may be held responsible. The armour-bearer of Saul died by his own act, and would be judged as a suicide as well as his master. Yet was it the sanction of the master that betrayed the servant to his crime. And doubtless, no sooner has Saul become the victim of his own remorse, than he trembles anew under the upbraiding eye of the faithful but deluded Doeg. Yet are we all gathering responsibility of this nature upon us. We may not discern or recognise the influence which emanates from us on every side, and is leading not a few to

hell. When the dependencies and relations of time, however, are manifested, shall one out of us all be found pure of the blood of souls? 'O Lord, deliver me from blood guiltiness!'

5. The fall of the Jewish monarch was triumph to Philistia, but terror to Israel; and neither party seem once to have referred to him whose designs nothing can embarrass nor retard. Let us, however, bear in mind, that whatever great man, or whatever anointed man, may cease from the world, 'He, whose greatness none can search,' ever lives, and lives to reign; whilst the anointed Priest sits upon his stable throne to effect all the destinies of his church without modification or delay. 'Jehovah is king, for ever and ever.'

6. If God means to raise up our bodies from the dust, it was both a hallowed and a grateful act of the men from Jabesh-gilead to rescue the mutilated remains of Saul and his sons, and commit them with honour to the grave. And in our case also, the doctrine of the resurrection, if honestly entertained and deeply felt, ought to invest every corpse with most reverential interest, and convert our funeral rites into a duty of religion, and an act of faith, as well as a tribute of affectionate esteem. 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.'

PRAYER.

O God, thou hast spoken to us at sundry times, and in divers manners, and in these last days by thy Son from heaven. Yet how many of us are of those who rebel against the light, and know not the ways thereof. Consider our case and hear our complaint, O Lord God; lighten our eyes, lest we sleep the sleep of death. Cause us to know the way wherein we should walk, for we lift up our souls unto thee. Teach us to do thy will, for thou art our God. Thy Spirit is good; lead us unto the land of uprightness. Lord, what man is he that liveth and shall not see death? The mighty are exalted for a little while, and then cut off as the tops of the ears of corn. Yea, God destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. Teach us, then, to number our days; and with all diligence may we prepare to meet our God. Let us remember how men shall clap their hands at the wicked, and hiss him out of his place, lest we too be brought down to the sides of the pit. But assured that the death of his saints is precious in the sight of the Lord, may we fall asleep in Jesus, and have our inheritance in light. Help us, Lord, to wait patiently till our change come. May we do nothing that will shorten our days in the midst. Let not our course be finished, until it be fulfilled. Lead us not, then, into temptation, O God, and if sinners entice us, may we not consent. Yet, neither let any of us put an occasion to fall in his brother's way, but may we have grace to walk in wisdom toward them who are without. Amid all the

changes of earth, may it be our consolation to discern an immutable God on high, and exclaim, He is stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. Yet Lord, how long? When wilt thou deliver up the kingdom to the Father? Lord Jesus, come quickly! Behold, the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. Behold, we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan for the redemption of the body. Come then, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Bid the trumpet sound, and swallow up death in victory. Say, Behold I make all things new, and let the earth bring forth her bud. Take to thyself thy great power, and bring thy sons from afar, and thy daughters from the ends of the earth! Ransom the dust of thy chosen, and fashion it according to thine own glorious body. Claim the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession; and let there be nothing to hurt or destroy therein. Let our eyes behold the new heavens and the new earth, and there may we dwell with thee and all thy saints for ever! All that we ask is in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI. 6.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN VII. 28—53.

REMARKS.

This is the question, 'Is this the very Christ?' (ver. 26.) and Jesus, in answer, declares that he has 'come out from' the presence of God, and 'is sent' with God's authority, ver. 28, 29. Let this assurance at once endear the Father to our hearts, and exalt the Son in our esteem. Jesus has come from the throne of heaven, and is ambassador for God. He was 'Jehovah's fellow,' and 'the express image of his person.' 'Yet he gave himself for us?' and the Father 'spared him not,' but for our sakes, sent him into the world 'to make an end of sin by the sacrifice of himself,' though he were his 'well-beloved Son,' and together they had rejoiced from everlasting. 'The love of God in Christ passeth understanding.' 'Many' who had seen his miracles, acquiesced in the statement of Jesus, but others would have cut him off on the spot, had it been within their power, ver. 30, 31. The same sun that so gently unfolds the blossom, and distills the fragrance of the rose, extracts the poison of the marah, and sets afloat its vapours. And how often does the truth which commands the reason of one, awaken the contempt of another? Yet, as it is not the influence of heaven which is ever pure, most like its source, that creates the mischief in the first instance, but that on which it shines; so neither is the truth of God, which ever will abide the holiest thing the world

possesses, to be blamed when it does not purify the heart; but the heart itself must be acknowledged as the stagnant pool of all corruption. Well then may we cry, 'create in me a clean heart.' No sooner did Jesus observe the officers sent from the Sanhedrim to watch him, than he knew that though 'his hour was not come,' his day must be well through; and foretold that he would soon be in a region which his enemies would covet, but never reach, ver. 33, 34. As yet the gates of mercy are open, and Jesus upon the threshold cries, 'him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' But in a little while, Jesus shall retire within the celestial city, and 'shut the door.' What though ye then cry, 'Lord, open,' and 'seek to enter in?' 'Ye shall not be able,' for where Christ and his friends are gone, 'ye cannot come. All inquiry about Christ is soon overlooked in the feast of tabernacles—a brilliant ceremonial during which all thoughtfulness should cease. Alas! amid its pomp, Jesus describes grief in many a heart and after that they have proved how vain is the word. He beseeches them to come to him, and in the gift of that Comforter who takes his place on earth, when he enters into glory, he assures them they will find all they long for, ver. 37—39. For the promise of the Spirit then, not less than for the gift of Christ, let us prize our bible, and magnify the hopes of our salvation. Let us see too, that we have 'received the Holy Ghost,' and are 'led by him. The promise of the Spirit has fallen from the Saviour's lips, like dew upon the multitude; and whilst in reference to his miracles, they coldly said 'when Messiah cometh, will he do more than this man?' they now exclaim, 'a Prophet,' 'the Christ' ver. 40, 41. Not more sweet is the offer of pardon to awakened and unexpiated guilt, than is the assurance of the Spirit to a heart brooding over it utter impotence, and tyrannical corruptions, and many fears. Even the Jewish officers, sent to apprehend Jesus, are melted under his last gracious proclamation, and putting up their fetters, they return to their employers, not to deliver up Jesus, but to assert that he is more than man, ver. 45, 46. To offer Christ and his Spirit to the illiterate and hardened is not hopeless labour. The officers are melted by the words of Jesus, but not the Sanhedrim, ver. 47—49. The reason is plain. The officers hear him—but their masters would not. And still it is because they have not given heed to them, that men repudiate the doctrines of the cross. Nicodemus bolder than once he was, and takes the part of Jesus amid the sarcastic taunts of his colleagues, ver. 50, 51. Behold 'the smoking wick,' a vigorous torch; 'the bruised reed,' a stedfast pillar, and learn not 'to despise the day of small things.' The furtive inquirer if gently dealt with, may yet stand forth the dauntless senator. If nothing more, the protest of Nicodemus seems at least to have frightened and dissolved the council, ver. 52, 53. Wicked men may be scared, though they will not be convinced; and put to shame, even when we cannot bring them to reason. Let the upright then assert their principle and rebuke those who falsely accuse them. This is a restraint which the righteous are bound to lay upon the enemies of God, and it is not possible to estimate

how much a secret dread of the godly keeps the wicked in their place.

PRAYER.

Blessed be Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! We give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to death for us all; and never would we cease to cry, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. O thou eternal Son of God, we cannot worship nor love thee as we ought. But we adore thee, as the brightness of the Father's image, and to whom is given a name above every name. Thou art the wisdom of God, and all things that thou hast heard of the Father, thou hast made known unto us. O! as thy friends, may we do whatsoever thou commandest, and show that we are under the law to Christ, though redeemed from its curse. Our understanding is indeed darkened, and our heart perverse; and it is the condemnation of many, that they love the darkness rather than the light. But give us an unction from the holy One, and we will walk in the Spirit, and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. Place us under the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and we shall be made free from the law of sin and death. Yet may we never forget, that even the joy of the Holy Ghost is connected with the receiving of the word, and must be built upon the truth. May we wait for the Spirit, yet search the scriptures. May we quench not the Spirit, yet prove all things. May our faith stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Glory be to thy name, O God, for having put the offer of salvation through the word, within the reach of all, and yet how many know not the law and will be accursed! O thou Spirit in whose hands are the hearts of all men, allow not any to judge themselves unworthy of eternal life. Show them that the same Lord over all, is rich to all who call upon him; and by thy secret energy may they so feel the power of all that Jesus ever said, that they shall exclaim, The words that thou speakest, they are spirit and they are life. O Lord, we thank thee, that we may hope that there are some, who, at least, are awakened by the truth, though they may not dare yet to confess it. Let us, in the spirit of meekness, help all such; and in due time may we see them speaking of thy testimonies before kings and not ashamed. Blessed Jesus, let all of us be more forward to avow thy cross, and defend thy cause, constrained by thy suffering for us. Marvellous love! that prompted thee to leave the radiance of glory for the shades of earth—the society of heaven for the solitude of

a desert. Marvellous love! that passed by all the provocations of malice, and grew more attached to man, the more he hated thee! Blessed Jesus, fill us with the Spirit of thy love, and help us to reflect its image. For thee, O let us not refuse the prison, or exile, or death. And what is easier, though rarer for thee, enable us to love our brother, and forgive our enemy. Amen.

TWENTIETH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS LXII. LXIII.

REMARKS.

In the former of these psalms, David would seem to be just entering upon unexpected adversity, and so may be considered as showing us how to act when the shock of trial first assails us. In the other, though his circumstances are not changed apparently, his feelings are more allayed, and now he shows us how to act when trouble is continued.

PSALM LXII. Ver. 1—7. When as yet his grief and perplexity are new, David at once betakes himself to God, in humble reliance, and 'silent' resignation, and patient 'waiting.' Even to this 'rock' his enemies pursue him, and threaten him with the 'mischiefs' of their oppression. But encompassed by the Almighty, he dares even to challenge those who hate him, and is only strengthened in his feelings of security by all the efforts of their rage. Ver. 8—12. It is a propitious trial, and should be a welcome enemy that brings us nearer God, and helps us to a surer conviction that 'none shall pluck us from the hand of his love.' And should men still persist in annoying us, let this only induce us to come farther within our omnipotent rampart, and hang ourselves on his steadfast arm with more childlike dependence. We yet shall 'see the salvation of God.' As a proof that, amid all his fears, the psalmist has really attained to quiet rest in God, we find him not only cleaving to this rock himself, but pointing those around to the same strong-hold, and assuring them that, in the end, neither prosperity nor wickedness can avail against that Being who encompasses the faithful with his 'mercy,' and whose 'power' will overthrow the workers of iniquity. 'What, then, though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished.' 'Associate yourselves, O sinners, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together and it shall come to nought. Speak the word, and it shall not stand, for the sake of Immanuel.'

PSALM LXIII. Ver. 1—5. Though still in the wilderness, and pursued, when he wrote the following psalm, David, as one whose fears had subsided, sings in a higher strain, and claims that God as his portion of whom he had just boasted as his confidence. True, as an exile from the sanctuary, as well as an outcast from his kingdom, the usual means of com-

munication with the source of his joy are interrupted. Still his thoughts are of the temple, and the God who was worshipped there. Of old had he communed with him. Often had he tasted of his goodness. And his prayer is for a renewed experience of his love—a bright vision of his glory even in the desert. Ver. 6—8. No privation is so bitter to a gracious mind as that of divine ordinances, and vehemently does it long until the breach be repaired. Yet it will not imagine that holy comforts can only be derived through customary channels, but even amid the desolation of trial, or the loneliness of solitude, it will rise to blissful intercourse with God. Perhaps David would not have ascended at once to so calm a frame by the simple contemplation of God. But he, at the same time, calls to mind how tenderly he had been helped before, and former experience rescues him from present unbelief and despondency, so that, though it be difficult, he still follows after God, and rejoices in his sustaining grace. Ver. 9—11. Past attainments are to be forgotten by the saint, lest he boast and loiter; but former enjoyments may well be brought into view, that they may realize to us our Father's love, and assure us what we may ultimately expect. For doubtless the righteous shall see an end of their miseries, and they who injured them shall understand that there is a God who ruleth in the earth. Not that the punishment of the wicked can be any satisfaction to a holy mind; but it is refreshing to know that God shall yet vindicate his providence, and by the retribution of another world, explain the difficulties of this. Would that all the enemies of God considered how he owes it to himself to punish them, and that in this itself they have an assurance that he will yet visit them for judgment, and consume them with terror.

PRAYER.

Lord, teach us what is man, and seeing that even in his best estate and of high degree, he is but vanity and a lie, let us never trust to an arm of flesh. Show us also, O God, what the world is; and let us feel that, even with all its riches, it is lighter than vanity, so that it may not be set in our hearts. But make known thyself to us, and it will suffice. Enable us to embrace thee through thy Son, and our soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and with fatness. Great, indeed, is the glory of thy power, and the thought of it makes us tremble. But also unto thee belongeth mercy, and in the multitude thereof we shall come unto thee, and not be consumed. We could not have known thee, O God, without thy word; blessed, therefore, be thy name that thou hast spoken unto the sons of men. Yea, let thy name be praised. Some of us have beheld thy excellence, and thy grace has proved sweet unto their taste. Lord, we remember thy love to us in time past; and still following hard after thee, we beseech thee to enrich our poverty, and allay our thirst, and sustain our weakness, and dissipate our sorrow, and enlarge our wisdom, and

irradiate our purity out of the treasures of thy fulness. O never let us miss thee in the sanctuary, neither deprive us at any time of those ordinances through which we are wont to commune with thee. In the courts of thy house let us always meet with thee, O God of our salvation, and till we exchange the temple on earth for the temple of heaven, let none compel us to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. But shouldst thou ordain for us a different lot, O God, grant that even in the wilderness of persecution we may retain our sense of thee; even amid the night of trial may we behold our God; even on the bed of death may we sing the praises of thy name. O God, we know that affliction is grievous, and that we especially shrink from the wrath of man. But let nothing and let no one discompose us or make us afraid. Help us to retire at once to thee as our confidence, and exclusively trust in thee as our refuge. May we be silent under the stroke of thy hand, yet never for a moment doubt of thy salvation. As for the thoughtless enemies of thy cause and people, pity them, O God, and show them thy terrors, lest suddenly they come to nought. But if they will not be afraid, Lord, hasten and subdue them. To thy judgment-seat we look for an end to all the ills of time and all the wrongs of men, and we shall wait in silence till thy sentence stops for ever the mouth of those who speak lies, but carries the righteous up to glory. Lord, hear these our humble prayers, for the sake of Jesus, our Saviour. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS LXIV. LXV.

REMARKS.

If the first of these psalms breathe the very melody of gladness, surely the other introduces us amid the darkest shades of human wickedness and grief.

PSALM LXIV. One might think that of course the man of faith, and charity, and prayer would not suffer from hatred and evil. But look at David, ver. 2—6. Notice how the wicked sought to embitter his peace, and tarnish his name, and expose his failings, and shed his blood, in powerful combination and with subtle craft, and ye may know what all the followers of Christ must needs expect. We may not be able, as David, to make our godliness felt by the station we occupy, or the influence we possess. But if our Christian excellence shall, from any cause, bear upon the wicked to their rebuke or restriction, then may we feel certain that we shall be the objects of their vindictive malice. 'For as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the

Spirit, even so it is now.' Yet, though the believer be troubled on every side, he is not distressed. He is perplexed, but not altogether without help. David fled to God in prayer, (ver. 1.) and so do all who are at peace with him through Christ. 'They know in whom they have believed,' and assured that his power cannot be defeated, neither his love withdrawn, they lie at his feet until 'their sentence come forth from his presence.' What though they must plead for a season? Deliverance comes at length, and their enemies are put to shame, ver. 7—10. 'Jehovah is greater than all gods, and in the thing wherein they deal proudly, he is above them.' None who trust in him shall ever be forgotten, but they who vex his chosen touch the apple of his eye, and must perish if they repent not.

PSALM LXV. We cannot almost suppose that the anticipations with which the last psalm closed are even already accomplished, and in this David hastens to the temple with the ascription of his praise and for the fulfilment of his vow, ver. 1. Undoubtedly, at all events, the answer of prayer is meant to draw us unto God, and to him who hears our 'intercessions should all flesh come' with the returns of gratitude. It is true we are not worthy of being admitted near to God; but he pardons our guilt for the sake of his Son, and then urges us, through his Spirit, to receive him as our portion and delight, ver. 3, 4. Not even the chief of sinners is prohibited from the service of the temple and the provisions of the covenant. But let him put 'on the wedding-garment,' and he may even sit down at 'the marriage supper of the Lamb,' and be 'satisfied with all the goodness of his house.' Yet is the glory of God not confined to his temple, nor is Zion the only scene of his worship and enjoyment. On the contrary, wherever the psalmist was driven, there he saw the tokens of his God, and found refuge under his wing, even far beyond the seas, ver. 5. And even so shall all who trust in him, and who carry God in their heart amid their wanderings. There may be no Zion where David strayed, nor marvellous Schemlah hovering near; but every mountain is an emblem of Jehovah's strength, and every ocean is the mirror of his infinitude. He reigns over every multitude, and abases the uttermost nations with the fear of his wonders. He leads out each season in its turn, and rules the changes of day and night. It is his sun that sheds summer on the earth, and from his hand autumn receives her fertility and loveliness, ver. 6—13. No one need say, then, that they cannot realize God in distant places, and worship him where no sanctuary opens its gates. Let us but substantiate the presence of God in all his works, and taste his love in all our comforts; let us acknowledge his control in providence, and trace his agency in creation; let us connect his person with the everlasting hills, and adore his fulness in the treasures of harvest, and even nature will minister to grace, whilst grace subordinates nature to holiness and truth.

PRAYER.

O God, our praise shall wait for thee, alike in the courts of thy house and amid the scenes

of thy creation. We shall acknowledge thee as the Creator and confidence of all ends of the earth, and we shall adore thee as the hearer of prayer and the God of our salvation. Being girded with power, thou settest fast the mountains by thy strength. Thus far, hast thou said to the sea, shalt thou come, and thou stillest the noise of its waves. Thou createst the light and the darkness. It is because thou hast ordained it that seed time and harvest, and heat and cold, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall never cease. O that all men would wisely consider thy doings, and that we, who dwell upon the earth, were afraid of thy tokens, O God, Lord, enable us to sing forth the honour of thy name, and make thy praise glorious, for how terrible art thou in thy works! Thou still visitest the earth, and doest according to thy will among the inhabitants thereof. Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without thy decree, and the hearts of all men are in thy hand. O may we mark thy terrible things in righteousness, and declare the work of God. Let us ever trust in thee, however dark our lot, and may we feel assured that in vain will the fowler lay his snare for them who have fled beneath thy wing. Holy Father, it is in thy sanctuary that thou showest all thy glory, and spreadest out all thy treasures. O that we may ever enjoy the privilege of dwelling in thy courts, and be satisfied with the goodness of thy holy temple. Truly we are not worthy of so exalted an honour, and in our natural state we cannot even relish such blessedness. But purge us with hyssop and we shall be clean. Renew us in the spirit of our minds, and we shall taste and see that the Lord is good. Thanks be to thy name, O God, Jesus died for our offences, and has risen again for our justification. May each of us be washed in his blood and clothed in his righteousness. Glory to our exalted Head, the Holy Ghost is now given because Christ is glorified! Let all of us be filled with the Spirit, and by him enlightened, purified, strengthened, and refreshed according to his glorious power. O what matters it, if, by our union to Christ and separation from the world, the ungodly hate and persecute us. Still glad in the Lord, and never weakened in our trust, may we bless them who curse us, and feel confident in regard to ourselves, that God will ever keep us, until in due time he bring forth our judgment like the light, and our righteousness as the noon-day. Hear the voice, O God, of our prayer, and as for all our transgressions do thou purge them away, for the sake of Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXV. 4—11.

SCRIPTURE—2 SAMUEL II.

REMARKS.

The circumstances in which David was placed, at the period to which this portion of the sacred history refers, were eminently fitted to ascertain the strength of his religious principles, and the amount of their practical influence on his character and conduct. He is now to exchange the sphere in which he has hitherto moved, for one of incomparably greater dignity and importance, but one, at the same time, of unspeakably greater danger. In fulfilment of a divine purpose previously communicated to him, (1 Sam. xvi.) he is now to ascend the throne of Israel. In the prospect of that event, however, he is not so much occupied with the thought of the glory which shall attach to him, as ruler of the chosen race, as he is impressed with the sacredness and awful responsibility of the office with which he is to be invested, and with a sense of his own insufficiency for the right fulfilment of its duties. Hence, instead of discovering an impatient eagerness for the honours of royalty, now that the death of Saul has called him to the throne, he manifests a godly jealousy over his own spirit. He is afraid to move one step without the guidance of a better wisdom than his own. He distrusts all merely human counsel. God is his refuge. He has recourse to prayer; to fervent, intense, reiterated prayer. He prays in the spirit of humble, affectionate, filial confidence. His great aim is to glorify God, by an entire submission to the divine will, and an unreserved acquiescence in the divine purposes; and that he may succeed in this aim, he earnestly implores, and with success, as the event proves, the succours of divine grace. That is, he acts under the conviction that from God 'cometh every good and perfect gift,' that it is not in man to direct his own steps, and that it is at once the highest of our privileges, and the first of our duties, 'in all our ways to acknowledge God.'

Now, this is religion. To maintain this high aim, and to prosecute it in an humble and prayerful spirit, is religion, and nothing else is. Let us not deceive ourselves. Without this, we are destitute of the spirit of the gospel, and cannot be meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

It is instructive to contrast, with the humility of David, the pride and waywardness of the other individuals whom this portion of scripture introduces to our view. In them we behold a development of the 'carnal mind,' and of the misery which follows the indulgence of its lusts. In the review of this contrast, let us solemnly ask ourselves, are we still under the dominion of an unsanctified nature, or, have we experienced that spiritual regeneration by the Holy Ghost, without which we cannot see the kingdom of God?

PRAYER.

Ever blessed Jehovah! from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, be pleased, of thy great mercy, to endow us with all spiritual and

heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Most especially do we pray thee for the gift of thy Holy Spirit, whom thou hast graciously promised to bestow on them who ask thee. With out his enlightening and sanctifying grace we can neither understand thy truth, nor do thy will. May he teach us to know, love, and obey thy blessed word. Under his guidance may we always walk in the way of thy testimonies, doing those things which are pleasing in thy sight. By his grace may we be made in all things to submit ourselves to thy gracious and holy disposal, and to be in thy hand as the clay in the hand of the potter. May the life we live in the flesh be by the faith of the Son of God and by faith justified, may it ever be our chief aim, as the disciples of Jesus, to glorify God with our bodies and spirits, which are his. And whilst we would desire to live to thy glory, O thou, merciful Father, keep us from being tempted beyond what we can bear. From the pollutions of our own hearts, and from the artifices of our great enemy, deliver us; sanctify us by thy truth, and preserve us to thy kingdom. We are most unworthy to ask these, or any blessings from thee. Pardon, O Lord, our manifold unworthiness, and in thy compassion answer our humble prayer, supplying our wants according to thy riches in glory by Jesus Christ our Lord in whom is all our hope. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 33—38.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN VIII. 1—30.

REMARKS.

The history of Christ's personal ministry on earth abounds with instances of the intense hatred with which he was regarded by that portion of his countrymen who refused to acknowledge him as the Messiah; as also of the schemes of subtle and malignant policy to which they had recourse, for the purpose of discrediting his mission, and resisting his claim. But the entire record of his ministry did not furnish an instance in which that enmity was more unequivocally expressed, or these schemes more skillfully arranged, than the scripture which we have now read. The case in reference to which Christ is here called to pronounce judgment, is one of enormous wickedness, outraging the authority of the divine law, and subverting the foundations of social order and happiness. The accusers are men reverend by their station, by their superior knowledge and learning, especially by divine truth, and above all, by the reputation of pre-eminent sanctity. Of such men, it was to be presumed the only motive that could actuate them in the appeal which they now make, must be a de-

solicitude for the maintenance of true religion, and of the virtues which flow from it. And indeed, their care for the preservation of religion and morals might have been questioned, if, with a case which outraged both brought under their review, and supported by evidence that admitted not either of doubt or denial, they had failed to submit it to his judgment who professed to be a divine teacher. In having recourse to his judgment, moreover, it must have been a consideration of weight with them, that the decision which he might pronounce, would supply the means of more exactly appreciating the evidence on which he rested his claims to be received as a divine teacher, and thus would guide them, and the people generally, to that conduct, in reference to these claims, which they ought to pursue.

Thus the matter might have been judged of by those who looked only to the outward appearance. It was now, however, under the adjudication of him who knew what was in man, and who, detecting under the guise of an ardent zeal for religion and righteousness, a spirit of pride, and selfishness, and cruelty, in those who solicited his sentence, not only escaped the snare in which they had hoped to entangle him, but turned into an occasion of their signal discomfiture and disgrace, the incident from which they had expected to extract proof that he was not the Messiah of their prophets.

The whole structure of the narrative makes it manifest that the design for which the scribes and pharisees asked Jesus to interpose his judgment in this instance, was, that they might find means of convicting him of inconsistency, either with Moses, or himself; with the doctrine of the fathers, or his own. Such inconsistency would, in either case, have been decisive against his claims; and his enemies thought he must now fall into it. He must either acquit or condemn the adulteress. If he shall acquit, then the whole testimony of scripture is against him. If he shall condemn, then what becomes of the fullness of grace and mercy, in the remission of the sins of the guiltiest, which he proclaimed as the distinctive feature of the economy which he came to establish? How vain, as well as wicked, their hopes! Their question is answered, but that answer unveils their hypocrisy, and overwhelms them by the awful severity of its withering rebuke.

'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.' Their consciences interpret the reply. Many of them, it may be, were conscious that they were actually guilty of the very crime against which they now profess a holy indignation, and all of them were penetrated with the conviction, that however it might be with them, in respect of that special offence, their characters were such, that they ought not to have appeared as accusers of the detected adulteress. Above all, the answer conveyed the conviction that it proceeded from a perfect acquaintance with their spiritual condition, and a just estimate of their true character. Appalled by the detection of their hypocrisy, and exposure of their wickedness, and consciously incapable of attempting a vindication of themselves, they withdraw in dismay from the presence of their reprover.

The adulteress is next dismissed, after a solemn warning; rebuked for her iniquity, and admonished to 'newness of life.'

Thereafter, persons of the same description as those whom he had immediately before rebuked, and many of them probably the same individuals, are again addressed by Christ. His discourse is interrupted by questions and objections on their part. These, again, serve as occasions for offering an exposition of the leading truths of divine revelation; such as the proper deity of Jesus; the vicarious nature of his obedience and death; and the impossibility of salvation being enjoyed by any of the human family who reject his atonement. These, let us bear in mind, are the essential truths of evangelical religion; without these, the gospel were a nullity. And it is only the experimental knowledge, and the hearty reception by faith of these truths, and others necessarily connected with them in scripture, that can constitute any man 'a new creature in Christ Jesus.'

PRAYER.

Most holy and merciful God! Father of the spirits of all flesh! unto thee would we now together lift up our hearts in prayer. Lord! teach us to pray aright, in faith, asking of thee those things which are agreeable to thy will, in the name of Christ, our Mediator. We would now render thee our humble and hearty thanks for all thy merciful kindness towards us, throughout the course of this day. Around thy footstool would we now say in fervent gratitude for thy goodness, Hitherto the Lord has helped us. Goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life. O! our souls bless the Lord, who loadeth us with benefits. Be stirred up, all that is within us, to praise him who is the health of our countenance, and our God! Almighty and everlasting Jehovah! we would specially magnify thy name together for Christ, thine unspeakable gift, through whom we have access again into the presence of thy majesty, and are enabled, in filial confidence and love, to say unto thee, Abba, Father. We bless thee for his mission, obedience, and death; for his victory over death; for his continual intercession in the heavenly sanctuary; for his perfect righteousness; for his quickening Spirit; and for his blessed word, the gospel of our salvation. May we rest in faith, on his finished work, as our only ground of hope towards God, knowing that our very righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the presence of infinite purity. Preserve us from insincerity and hypocrisy, in professing discipleship to Christ. Deliver us from a selfish and worldly spirit. May we have the same mind that was also in Jesus. May the Holy Spirit take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us, in demonstration, and in power. May thy

word be the man of our counsel. By it may we be admonished, instructed, warned, and guided in the way wherein we ought to go, and may we never be allowed to turn aside from the path of thy testimonies, to the right hand, or to the left, but may our path be like that of the morning light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Let us have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of our sins. And may the peace of God, which passeth understanding, keep our hearts and minds until the day of Christ, our Lord, in whose name we humbly present these and all our supplications. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIII. 8—13.

SCRIPTURE—2 SAMUEL V.

REMARKS.

Though the claims of David to be recognized as king of Israel were founded on a divine appointment, they were resisted by the great mass of the Jewish nation. Of the twelve tribes, only that of Judah acknowledged the sovereignty of the son of Jesse. The remaining tribes united in a confederacy to raise Ishbosheth to the throne of his father. The nation was, in consequence, divided into hostile factions; distracted by intestine discord; and desolated by civil war. From the great disparity of force, indeed, with which the rival sovereigns were able to support their respective claims, there seems to be little reason for anticipating other results than the defeat of David and the ruin of his cause. Far different, however, was the event. For seven long years was the Jewish community involved in the miseries of civil warfare. In each successive contest, the arms of the son of Jesse were crowned with victory. The resources of his adversaries were exhausted. Their courage failed. And finally, their chief, by an act of atrocious treachery, was put to death. With his life ended the hopes of his adherents. They now invoke the clemency of the conqueror. They proffer allegiance to David, as their rightful sovereign. They crave the protection of his government, and the privileges of his subjects; and they urge their plea by every argument that might incline his heart to mercy. They appeal, 1. To the relationship subsisting between him and them as members of the same family; 2. To the services which he had formerly rendered to Israel, and the victories which, on their behalf, he had won, during the reign of their late monarch; and, 3. To the divine purpose, in fulfilment of which he was now become the shepherd and the king of Israel.

Reduced as his enemies now were, to the necessity of casting themselves upon his clemency, David, had he followed the dictates of earthly wisdom, might have inflicted a terrible revenge on their rebellion; and to all the considerations by which they now

enforced their prayer, he might have replied, that these should have restrained them from offering that resistance to his authority which had entailed so many calamities on the kingdom. But so did not David act towards his vanquished foes. Too long have the miseries of war desolated the country. The nation must have repose. He proclaims an universal amnesty. Nor does his magnanimity lose its reward. All hasten to pay him the homage of an hearty allegiance. Amid the claims of a grateful population, he is crowned king of Israel. His reign is hailed with enthusiastic fervour, as the commencement of an era, glorious in the annals of their nation. Of the benefits of his government, the most sanguine anticipations are formed; and these are found, in the result, to be far short of the amount of prosperity, temporal and spiritual, which shed so bright a lustre on David's reign.

David, let us bear in mind, was a type of Christ, the King of Zion. The government of David was typical of the Messiah's kingdom. The gospel, like its divine Author, was, at its first promulgation, despised, and rejected of men. Its spiritual beauties were unperceived, its blessings were unappreciated. Its messengers were discredited, persecuted, put to death. The people, and their rulers, were confederate with the prince of the power of this world, in an attempt, audaciously wicked, to obstruct its progress, and to resist its triumphs. And from the first hour that its heralds went forth on 'the errand to save,' these enemies have persisted in their hostility to Christ and his kingdom.

But in the eternal purpose of the Father, the uttermost parts of the earth are given to him for his inheritance. That purpose shall be fulfilled. 'His kingdom shall come.' Already the cross has won unnumbered victories. Around the celestial throne are countless myriads of ransomed and glorified spirits. On earth, too, is a remnant chosen out of the world, who now live by faith, who now fight under the banner of the great Captain, and who shall reign with him for ever in his glory. These are part of his triumphs, and they are pledges of universal empire.

Blessed are the subjects of this kingdom! Christ is theirs; he is their friend, their beloved, their king their all. And all things are theirs, for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

PRAYER.

Almighty God! King of kings, and Lord of lords, thou art governor among the nations; Thou rulest supreme throughout the universe; Thou art the eternal source of wisdom, order, and peace. In thy favour is the stability of thrones, and the prosperity of kingdoms. To thee we gratefully ascribe the blessings which we enjoy, as the subjects of a paternal government, and as the citizens of a free state. Above all, we bless thee for the light of thy holy word and for the gospel and kingdom of Christ. May his throne be established in our hearts! To his government may we yield the homage of a devoted and hearty allegiance; always, and in a

things, seeking his glory. May we be partakers of the blessings which he reigns to impart. May we now know him in the fellowship of his sufferings, and in conformableness to his death; and when the trials and sorrows of this sad and fleeting scene are over, may we, of infinite mercy, be received into his presence, and reign with him in his kingdom! Blessed God! hasten the period, when all men shall know thee, from the least to the greatest. Have respect unto thy covenant, and visit, in thy mercy, the dark places of the earth that are full of the habitations of horrid cruelty. Let thy saving health be known among all nations! Let the people praise thee. Lord! let all the people praise thee. And let thy best blessing rest on our native land. Specially preserve and bless our Queen, and all inferior magistrates. May they rule in thy fear; and under them may all the interests of the nation prosper by thy blessing! Hear us, O Lord, in these our prayers; and when thou hearest, forgive; defer not, but answer; and do unto us according to thy great compassion, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 15—19.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN VIII. 31—59.

REMARKS.

The discourse recorded in the foregoing context, had the effect of converting many who heard it, to the faith of Christ. And if any degree of prejudice, or opposition to divine truth, on the part of man, might excite our astonishment, we might wonder that it should have failed of producing this effect on all. But there were those to whom that discourse was addressed, who continued, notwithstanding, ignorant of the truths which it illustrated, and opposed to those views of the Messiah's character and kingdom which it set forth. These are the persons addressed in this portion of scripture.

They, in common with the great body of their countrymen, had formed an erroneous estimate of their religious principles; not, indeed, by appreciating them beyond their true value, but by misconceiving altogether their nature and design. They imagined that the mere possession of these privileges, without reference to their practical effects, conveyed a title to the enjoyment of the divine favour. They were the children of Abraham, and they had no conception that any thing besides was required to constitute them children of God, and heirs of glory. Accordingly, the mere statement by Christ, that something more was necessary, exasperated their rage, and provoked their insolence. And when that statement was followed by another, to this effect, viz. that it was because 'that they were not of

God,' that they heard not the words of his messenger, they gave expression to their resentment in terms the most offensive that language could supply. 'Say we not well, That thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?' Even after they had thus addressed him, Christ, in marvellous forbearance, continued to reason with them, urging on their acceptance the gift of eternal life. The farther discoveries of his grace and power, however, served only to add intensity to their hatred, and to confirm them in their unbelief. Boasting of their descent from Abraham, they reject the message, and disown the authority of Abraham's Lord. Professing zeal for the honour of their patriarchs and prophets, they refuse the homage of their faith and obedience to him, of whom all the prophets bear witness that he is 'the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,' and whose reign all the patriarchs longed to see established on the earth. 'Abraham rejoiced to see this day; and he saw it, and was glad.' And now that that day had fully come, these children of Abraham, glorying in their lineage, instead of rejoicing in the fulfilment of all the types, and predictions, and promises, by the faith of which the saints had been sustained and sanctified, under the economy that was now to pass away, cling, in infatuated ignorance, to the 'weak and beggarly elements' of an abrogated dispensation, and reject, to their ruin, the counsel of divine mercy and love.

Such is the sad history of the fruits of our Lord's ministry, in multitudes of his countrymen. We marvel at their infatuation, and condemn their wickedness; and we do so the more readily, that it seldom occurs to us to fear that we may ourselves be involved in guilt as aggravated, and in folly as ruinous as theirs. Let us not, however, shut our eyes to the fact, that it is the tendency of our corrupt and carnal nature to pervert and misapply our religious privileges, in the same way as did the Jews, in the instance which we have now been contemplating; and that we are hence in danger of converting into elements of wrath, on the day of final retribution, those opportunities of improvement which are now given us to be a 'savour of life unto life.' Let us, above all, bear continually in our remembrance, that 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;' that of ourselves, we can do nothing; and that in Christ alone is our strength. And let it be our prayer continually, 'Lord, search us, and try us, and see what wicked way is in us, and lead us in the way everlasting.'

PRAYER.

Most holy God! with whom sin cannot dwell, have mercy upon us sinners! By sin we have been brought very low, we have lost thine image; we have forfeited thy friendship; we are obnoxious to thy wrath. Thy law we have broken; thy grace we have despised. We have never appreciated as we ought, thine unspeakable gift; we have often lightly esteemed it. Not seldom have we rested in a mere profession of godliness, and in the enjoyment of external privileges, whilst we were aliens from the com-

monwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, and without God, and without hope in the world. Thy wrath is revealed against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men. We are unclean, we are undone. We have sinned, and what shall we answer thee, O thou preserver of men? Most merciful Jehovah! we bless thee, that with thee is redemption that thou mayest be sought unto; and that where sin aboundeth, grace doth much more abound. We bless thee for the gift of thy Son, whose blood is the propitiation for our sins; and in whom thou art just, and the justifier of the ungodly. We rejoice that whosoever believeth in him shall never perish, but shall have eternal life; and that all who by faith in him are delivered from condemnation, are not only commanded by his word, but by his grace are enabled to walk in newness of life. Lord, bless and pity us. Cause the light of the knowledge of thy glory in the face of Christ, to shine into our hearts. Leave us not to perish under the guilt and power of sin, whilst the message of eternal life is proclaimed to our acceptance; but, in this the day of our merciful visitation, may we have grace to lay hold of the hope set before us. May Christ be infinitely precious to us, as he is to all who believe. May our hearts rejoice in his love. May our lives show forth his praise. Give us the victory over the world, the devil, and the flesh. May we be thine for ever, in the bond of that covenant which is ordered in all things and sure. Have mercy upon all men. Turn again the captivity of Jacob. Restore the exiles of Judah. Bless the ends of the earth, with thy salvation. These our humble and unworthy supplications we present before thee, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 12.

SCRIPTURE—2 SAMUEL XV.

REMARKS.

With what a picture of baseness, ingratitude, and unnatural cruelty are we presented in the conduct of Absalom! Recollecting the affectionate generosity with which his father restored him to his favour, we feel indignant at the unfilial requital he received. Nothing, indeed, can be imagined more odious and unprincipled than the character of this man, and his history is a powerful warning to beware of such disobedience and unnatural rebellion. How hateful is the resolute and wicked determination with which he adopted measures to ruin his indulgent parent, and advance his own interests. Under the pretence

of being actuated by the highest principles of justice, he insinuated his father's disregard of rectitude; and as nothing so effectually rouses the indignation of a people against their rulers as a sense of their wrongs, real or imaginary, his flattery and falsehood were speedily instrumental in spreading the spirit of thoughtless disaffection. History is replete with the sins which ambition and discontent have originated; and the resources to which they have often prompted, are of the most contemptible description. In the case of Absalom, discontent led to the most perfidious and unnatural conduct. Both in his case and in that of David, their own iniquity did correct them.

Our minds are relieved, as we contemplate this painful scene, when we consider the mutual generosity and attachment which distinguished David and Ittai. Although plunged in the depth of misfortune, and therefore requiring sympathy, with the tenderness which is characteristic of superior minds, David requested the exiled stranger not to think of sharing his misfortunes. On the other hand, Ittai, resolute in his devotedness to his master, insisted on accompanying him. So graciously does our God mingle mercies with his severest judgments. Let us imitate the noble-minded Ittai and David's people, in showing affection and kindness to the unfortunate. It was, doubtless, a mournful alleviation of his sufferings to witness their attachment and their grief. In David's concern for the ark, lest it might be injured or lost, we have an example both of his personal religion, and his solicitude for the interests of the church. Indeed, it should be remembered that the two are generally combined, and carelessness regarding the prosperity of Zion, is too sure an indication of individual irreligion. In particular circumstances, it is proper to consider our misfortunes or our prosperity as evidences of the divine displeasure or approbation. David felt assured, that if he found favour in God's sight, he would restore him to his former spiritual advantages. But the submission with which he contemplated the reverse, and said, 'Let him do to me what seemeth unto him good,' is worthy of our continual imitation. Evidently it is our duty to employ every lawful means to be extricated out of the difficulties in which we may be involved, and we owe a debt of gratitude to those whom God, in his providence, raises up to counsel and to aid us. But we must, at the same time, beware of acting on the unscriptural sentiment, that the end justifies the means. It is impossible to approve of the dissimulation which David practised, in advising Hushai to insinuate himself into Absalom's counsels, that he might defeat the measures of Ahithophel. Without doubt these measures would have been equally overturned, had a different and more justifiable means been adopted. When he had besought the Lord to turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness, trusting in his power and in the assurance that he had all hearts at his disposal, he ought to have sanctioned no plan for the accomplishment of his design which was not consistent with the strictest principles of rectitude. In whatever circumstances we may be placed, let us derive consolation and encouragement from the exalted reflection that all hearts are in the divine hand, and that he turneth them as streams of water.

PRAYER.

Most merciful Father, we approach thy throne in the name of our adorable Redeemer, beseeching thee to accept of our morning sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Make us more and more deeply sensible of our obligations to love and to serve thee. We offer up our expressions of gratitude for the mercies we have received during the night; for the refreshing repose we have enjoyed; for the protection extended towards us during the unconscious hours of slumber; for the blessings which we have already received this morning; and for the comfortable circumstances in which, as a family, we have been permitted again to meet. Graciously be pleased, O Lord, to guide and protect us during the day on which we have been allowed to enter. Most earnestly do we implore thee to impress on our minds the lessons of thy holy word, and to enable us, under the influences of thy most blessed Spirit, to act agreeably to the dictates of thy revelation. Prevent us, we entreat thee, from indulging in unholy ambition, or discontent, or pride, or from exhibiting any want of affection towards each other, in the several relations in which we stand. Allow us not for a moment to give way to any hypocritical pretences, or to seek, in our intercourse with our fellow-men, to attain evil objects by assuming a religious character. Ever let us be animated with the pure, and elevated, and charitable spirit of the gospel of our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. As we profess ourselves to be his followers, we fervently pray that we may have a constant solicitude to possess the mind for which he was distinguished while on earth. And while characterised for our personal devotedness to thy service, help us, we most humbly beseech thee, to take a sincere and holy interest in the circumstances of those with whom we are in any way connected, sympathising with them in their troubles, and alleviating their cares and their sorrows as far as lies in our power. And, O God, if it please thee, let us all, during this day, find favour in thy sight. Impart to us, individually, such a sense of thy presence and thine almighty power, as shall fill us with joy, and comfort, and elevated emotion. Ever let us confide in thy promises, and trust in thy gracious protection. But shouldst thou be pleased, most holy and sovereign Disposer of events, to hide thy blessed countenance from us, and to show us, by the events of thy providence, that thou hast, on account of our numerous and aggravated transgressions, no delight in us, we do most earnestly implore thee to enable us, in the spirit

of the most pious submission, to adopt the language of thy servant, and to say, Let the Lord do to us what seemeth good unto him. And, while thou dost chastise us for our manifold offences, leave us not entirely, nor take thy Spirit from us, but in thine own due time restore us to thy favour, and bless us with the light of thy countenance, and receive us at last to thy glory. Bless all who are dear to us. Keep them from evil, and give them all thou knowest to be for their good. Hear our humble prayers. Pardon the sins of this approach, and do to us above what we can ask or think, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE V.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN IX. 1—21.

REMARKS.

It was when Jesus was passing through the streets of Jerusalem, either after he had miraculously withdrawn from the temple, or as some suppose, about three months afterwards, at the feast of the dedication, that he saw the man blind from his birth. With characteristic compassion, and that he might impress the minds of his disciples with a deeper conviction of his divine power, he entered into conversation with him. Influenced by the prevailing opinion that external calamities were the consequences of peculiar sins, and perhaps by the heathen notion of the transmigration of souls, his disciples inquired whether his blindness was owing to his own wickedness, or that of his parents. Ignorance is the parent of erroneous sentiments, and sometimes of malicious judgments, and as Jesus is the source of all spiritual knowledge, we ought habitually to go to him for instruction. God permits calamities to befall us, in order that his glory may be manifested. Our Saviour declares that this man's blindness was allowed, that he might be the subject of miraculous exertion, and the means of displaying the divine mercy and power. Without doubt, sin in general is the cause of suffering, but to trace the more conspicuous calamities of our fellow-creatures to particular transgressions would be the destruction of all the benevolent feelings of our nature. How much more charitable and advantageous to resolve them all into the divine appointment! In contemplating the troubles of others, let the general principle which our Lord lays down, predominate in our minds, and the moral benefit will be great. Notwithstanding the vigilance of his enemies, Jesus declared it was necessary for him, while on earth, to complete the object of his mission. His death was approaching, when his earthly labours would be terminated. We also, while in life, have a great work to accomplish, and as we do not know how soon our night may arrive, let us imitate our Master in benevolent zeal and

activity. What a glorious and important truth our Lord took occasion to reveal from his present circumstances. Surely the power he now exhibited ought to be a strong encouragement to apply to him, as the light of the world, for spiritual illumination. Unquestionably our application will not be in vain. But, for the procurement of spiritual light, means must be employed. It was symbolically to teach this great truth that our Lord anointed the eyes of the man with clay; and let us remember that, in spiritual matters too, the most unlikely means may be attended with the most important consequences. Siloam, in which the man was told to wash, probably had its name from having been sent or given as a blessing to the Jews, and our Saviour's object was merely to try his faith. In different ways he still tries the faith of his people, and many blessings are withheld on account of unbelief. Only comply with the divine command, and though we may go to ordinances in a state of spiritual darkness, we shall come back seeing. Unusual surprise was awakened by the miracle. Various conjectures were formed and inquiries made. No fact could be better attested, and the man himself decided the question. Nor did he hesitate to narrate the whole particulars. It is delightful to be able to give an account of our spiritual enlightenment, and profitable to retrace the means by which it was effected. But, influenced by the most determined prejudices and unbelief, the Jews were not satisfied. And such has ever been the case. An infatuated bitterness is inseparable from aversion to the gospel; and the Jews, under its influence, were blind to the plainest dictates of reason, urged by this poor blind man, by whom they are so strikingly exposed and reproved.

PRAYER.

Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, we, thine unworthy children, presume again to lift our eyes to the throne of thy glory. We cannot praise thee enough. We cannot thank thee with sufficient earnestness for thy constant preservation and kindness. Thou hast been very gracious to us this day. Thou hast supplied our various wants. Thou hast kept us from the evils and dangers to which we are at all times exposed. Thou hast surrounded us with goodness and mercy. Thou hast imparted to us blessings which, in thy sovereign mercy, thou hast withheld from many more deserving of thy favour. O give us truly grateful hearts. Make us feel thy paternal love. And we most ardently beseech thee to give us grace to manifest our gratitude, by the increasing spirituality of our minds and purity of our actions. We lament our natural unthankfulness and disregard of thy providential tenderness. We feel ourselves naturally to be blind, and naked, and miserable. But, O we bless thee with all our heart, that Christ has come into the world to enrich and enlighten all who come under the power of his instructions. We rejoice that he

declared himself to be the light of the world. O let us richly experience his illuminating influences. Deeply impress our minds with the consideration, that he that followeth him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. Let us follow him. Anoint the eyes of our understanding with thy grace, that we may behold the world of spiritual glories which thy word has disclosed. We know, from past experience, that unless we be enlightened from above, we cannot see the things of the Spirit of God. O send us daily to wash in the fountain of the Redeemer's blood. And, O Lord, enable us, even in the midst of thine enemies, undauntedly to confess the name of our blessed Master, and to acknowledge the blessing which we have derived from his mercy and his love. Let us have deeper convictions of the divinity of his character and mission, and let us never shrink from avowing our adherence to his sacred cause. May we never be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, but having experienced it to be the power and the wisdom of God to our salvation, may we walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we have been called, and let our light so shine before men, that they may be induced to glorify thee, our heavenly Father. And we entreat thee, most merciful God, to send forth thy light and thy truth, throughout our dark and benighted world. May the Sun of righteousness every where arise with healing in his rays, and may the period speedily arrive when he, who is the light of the world, shall entirely dispel the darkness which covers the earth, and the gross darkness which surrounds its nations. O make us all more and more interested in the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, and to the utmost of our power make us instrumental in diffusing the heavenly light, with which we pray that our minds may be more richly illuminated. We commend to thy love and protection all our dear friends, relations, benefactors, and well-wishers; the sick, the distressed, and the dying. O Lord, be very merciful to them all, and bless them according to their necessities. Be with us this night. Keep all evil from our dwelling. Give us the sleep of thy beloved. Restore us to the duties of another day, and help us to glorify thy name, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Graciously hear these our humble supplications. Pardon all our short-comings, and do to us above what we can ask or think, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LIX. 33.

SCRIPTURE—2 SAMUEL XVII.

REMARKS.

We have, in this chapter, a most striking instance of the peculiar superintendence which God exercises over his people, and the general control which he exerts over the human mind. Nothing can be more interesting, than to observe how his purposes are accomplished, while the agents he employs imagine themselves under no superior influence, and to be executing their own designs. David had been guilty of very aggravated transgressions, and he was now enduring the punishment. It was only, however, as a penitent offender he was to be chastised. He required to be more deeply impressed with the evil nature of sin, and to be aroused to a more earnest repentance; but it was not the divine intention that he should be altogether destroyed. Often do we see God acting in this endearing character of a compassionate Father, and it is well when his paternal chastisements produce the effects he has in view.

Nothing less atrocious than the entire destruction of his affectionate parent could now satisfy the cruel-hearted and profligate Absalom. But God signally turned the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness, by the very means by which Absalom sought to accomplish it, viz. the superior wisdom of Hushai. Intelligence of what had occurred was ordered to be sent to David, and once more, for the encouragement of the Lord's people in all ages and circumstances, an immediate interposition of providence was manifested in the concealment and preservation of the messengers. And who can avoid admiring the goodness and compassion of God towards his afflicted servant, in inducing all his followers so faithfully and affectionately to accompany him in his progress? Evidently the interesting fact is recorded, not only as an instance of their attachment and devotedness, but as a peculiar evidence of the divine guardianship. How grateful should we feel for these merciful alleviations of the troubles with which God may be pleased to visit us on account of our sins, and in order to spiritualize our minds; and let us ever learn to realize his hand in the events of his providence. In the melancholy end of Ahithophel, which is awful to contemplate, we are presented with an additional evidence of the miserable consequences of sin, and especially of sins peculiarly aggravated. Such events are found here and there on the divine record, as proofs of the striking fact, that, according to the divine appointment, transgression constitutes its own punishment. Before Ahithophel could have been brought to perpetrate such a deed, what a host of dark and tormenting passions must have raged in his bosom—insulted pride—an intolerable sense of having been thwarted—the fear of a speedy downfall, and the dread, perhaps, of an ignominious death. It is a deplorable consideration, that the very intellectual munificence of providence has often been the ruin of its possessors. Whatever be our qualifications or attainments, let us pray with earnestness that they may never originate vanity or unprincipled

ambition; but be made the means of advancing the glory of God, and the highest interests of our fellow-creatures. And in the fact, that, in answer to David's prayer, the counsel of Ahithophel was turned into foolishness against himself, we have every encouragement, in all our circumstances, to offer our petitions to the 'Answerer of prayer.'

Having assembled his numerous army, and as Hushai advised, placed himself at its head, with cruel and heartless determination, Absalom pursued his father over the Jordan. But again did the distressed monarch experience the divine goodness. Deeply thankful he must have been, when he contemplated such a manifestation of the divine superintendence, in raising up friends, even among strangers, so liberally to supply his wants, and exhibit their sympathy. We are naturally impressed with the attentions of a warm heart, and in trouble they are peculiarly acceptable. Let us strive to imitate the generous conduct of David's friends, and in proportion to our means, assist and encourage the disconsolate and distressed. 'He that watereth, shall be watered also himself.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, we bless thee, that we have been once more allowed to celebrate thy praises, to read a portion of thy word, to meditate on its lessons, and to prostrate ourselves at thy footstool. We acknowledge ourselves to be unworthy of the very least of all thy mercies, and we adore thy goodness and thy love, which, notwithstanding our transgressions, continue to be extended towards us. Truly thy mercies are new to us every morning, and we are every instant experiencing the tokens of thy loving-kindness. We deplore our ingratitude and our forgetfulness of thy most undeserved regard. When we contemplate our natural corruptions, and our actual and multiplied offences, we cannot sufficiently express our thankfulness, that thou hast told us in thy word that we have an advocate at the right hand of the divine majesty, even Jesus Christ the righteous. Most humbly do we plead forgiveness, on the ground of his all-sufficient atonement and prevailing intercession. We flee for refuge to lay hold on this wonderful hope, which has been so graciously set before us. We desire to trust with greater exclusiveness and simplicity in his perfect righteousness, and to make it the only ground of our dependence for salvation. O Lord our God, be pleased to receive us for his sake, and increase our faith, and blot out all our transgressions, and inspire us with holy determinations; and pour on us, in richest abundance, the influences of thy Spirit, and sanctify us wholly, and preserve us unblameable. Make thy word more and more the instrument of our spiritual advancement. Sanctify us by thy truth. Deliver us from all evil and unnatural sentiments. In all the relations in which

we are placed, let us be animated with the lofty spirit of Christian sympathy and love. And with whatever afflictions, in the course of our journey onwards to eternity, thou mayest be pleased to visit us, on account of our transgressions, let us ever remember, that if really thy children, thou wilt make every thing work for our good. We rejoice in the consideration that all hearts are at thy disposal, and that thou turnest the thoughts of men as rivers of water. We know, and we feel it delightful to acknowledge, that nothing can befall us but what thou dost permit, and what is under thine omnipotent control. And we bless thee for the experience thou hast already afforded us, that of thine infinite compassion thou dost mingle unspeakable mercies with all the chastisements with which thou seest meet to visit thine erring children. Let us acknowledge thee in all our ways, and mercifully direct all our steps. We throw ourselves, O thou God of all grace, on thy protection during this day. We beseech thee, to guide us and to enable us continually to glorify thy name. We commend to thee all who are dear to us, and we entreat thee to have mercy on our ruined world, and to spread the knowledge of thy truth among all its families. And hear these our prayers, and accept of us and our services, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 41.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN IX. 22—41.

REMARKS.

Fear, especially in religious matters, often produces an unjustifiable cautiousness. Dreading the threatened excommunication from the synagogue, the parents of the man who had been born blind refused to tell how he had received his sight. There is something altogether astonishing in the prejudice which the Jews entertained against the Saviour. So deep and determined was it, that they had resolved to receive no evidence whatever of his Messiahship. And there are too many in our own day who resemble them. We often see the gospel condemned before its evidences are studied, or its doctrines ascertained, and there is no state of mind against which we should be more vigilantly on our guard. Having failed in their miserable attempt to make his parents contradict the evidence he had adduced, the man was again summoned into their presence, and solemnly adjured to acknowledge the truth. This seems to be the meaning of the expression, 'give God the praise.' It is equivalent to a demand, that he should declare an oath, either that he had never been blind, or that he had entered into a collusion with Christ; and to

induce him to confess that there was imposture in the case, they declared their own conviction that Jesus was a sinner. Opposition to the Redeemer has often advanced his interests. It has elicited confessions, and established truths which would otherwise never have been known; so it did on the present occasion. Not only did the man adhere to his previous declaration, but while he wisely refrained from entering on a debate regarding the character of Christ, he adduced the most powerful argument in favour of his divine mission. Facts are the weightiest answers to the cavils and the taunts of infidels. Only let the gospel exercise its legitimate influence on our character; let us show, by the consistency and purity of our profession, that our eyes have in reality been opened; and the enemies of the truth will be compelled to acknowledge its divinity.

Determined, if possible, to draw the man into a contradiction, the Jews repeated their interrogations. But their pertinacious unbelief only increased his courage, and emboldened his address. He proved that God hath often chosen the 'foolish things of the world to confound the wise;' and though the Jews persecuted, Christ comforted him.

As a silent reproof of the cruel power which the Sanhedrim exercised, and an intimation that their authority was drawing to a close, our Lord declared, in the hearing of some of their members, that though they rejected him, he had come into the world to exercise a higher authority, and administer more important judgments. And how awful were to be the results of his spiritual administration. While those who were humbled under the consciousness of their spiritual ignorance would receive a spiritual illumination, he declared, that those who should be so elated with their knowledge as to overlook the divine communications, would be consigned over to judicial blindness, and deprived of all the advantages of his mission. And such has been, and such ever will be, the law of his evangelical kingdom. Divine truth invariably either softens or hardens the heart. Let us pray with all earnestness, that we may be preserved from that pride and self-sufficiency which prevent so many thousands from deriving advantage from the preaching of the gospel. Let us not imagine, like the pharisees, that because we possess the word of God, we therefore see, and have no need of an inward illumination. If we do, our sin must remain unpardoned. Impressed, on the contrary, with a conviction of our spiritual blindness, let us trust in the great light of the word, that our sins may be all removed. Enjoying so many opportunities of ascertaining the truth, let us beware of neglecting them ever remembering, that to whom much is given, of them much will be required. Let us ever beware of shutting our eyes against the truth, lest they be opened, when it is too late, on the awful realities which it shall disclose.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we again prostrate ourselves before thy throne of mercy and love. Bow down thine ear, and hear us. Fill our souls with enlarge and lofty apprehensions of thine infinite perfections. O Lord, how worthy art thou to receive

our most implicit homage, and our deepest adorations. We are thy children, continually depending on thee for life and all its enjoyments. And thou art ever exercising over us thy paternal superintendence. We are the constant monuments of thy compassion and thy care. And O we are most unworthy of thy continued mercies. While every day is giving us new and resistless evidences of thy goodness and tenderness, we are sensible that we are every day altogether undeserving of thy gracious providence and protection. We have this day again been unmindful of thy presence, and of the perpetual obligations we lie under to dedicate our time and all our advantages to thy service. How seldom hast thou been in our thoughts; and O how very forgetful have we been of the riches of thy grace as manifested in the glorious gospel of thy Son Jesus Christ. We do most sincerely lament, that the great and purifying truths of thy blessed revelation exert such a limited influence on our minds and character. We lament the strong and frequent dominion which sin has over us. Pardon, O Lord, we most humbly beseech thee, pardon the transgressions we have again this day committed against thee; pardon us for his sake who loved us, and who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from iniquity. O Lord, let thy mercy be great toward us. Turn unto us, and have mercy upon us; and give strength to thy servants, and show us a token for good. O confirm our faith in thy most holy word, and enlarge our knowledge of the gospel of thy Son. We trust that our eyes have been opened by his Almighty power. God grant that we may all be able, from blessed and delightful experience, to say, that although we were once blind, yet we now see. O let us more and still more distinctly see thy truth, and more impressively feel its power. Make us ever rejoice in being called the disciples of Jesus, and let us, in all circumstances, prove the genuineness of our discipleship, by the freedom and boldness with which we plead his cause, as well as by letting our light shine before men. Let us ever adore him for all his mercies toward us, and especially for the measure of spiritual light which he has imparted to our minds. Enable us cordially to rejoice, that for judgment he has come into the world, that he is exalted above all principalities and powers; and that at the right hand of the divine majesty he dispenses the blessings of his salvation to his church, and to his people individually. Let us all be partakers of his grace, and ever preserve us from the deceitful imagination that we have already all the spiritual light

which we require. May we constantly come to the light, that our deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God. Accept of our thanks for all the mercies of this day. Be with us during the night. Keep us, and all dear to us, from evil; preserve us to see the light of a new day, and let us, one day after another, till we come to the close of our lives, grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. All we ask is for his sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXL 44.

SCRIPTURE—2 SAMUEL XVIII.

REMARKS.

We here see the security and safety of those who trust in God, in the case of David, and the punishment of treachery, ambition, and rebellion in the cases of Ahithophel and Absalom. We are ready, particularly, to condemn the unnatural conduct of the latter. We are ready to admit, that the sin of Absalom was great, and that his punishment was just: that he was guilty of no common crime in compassing the death of his father, and in striving to seize that sceptre which had been put into his hands by the King of kings, and Lord of lords. And it would be difficult to over-rate the guilt of such a rebellion, or to name a punishment that would be too great for such an offence. But in passing sentence against this traitorous subject, and this prodigal son, should we not feel that in this we condemn ourselves, for, have not every one of us rebelled against a higher sovereign, and a kinder father, than he who sat on the throne of Israel? We have rebelled against our Creator and our Preserver: against our Lawgiver and our Judge. We have cast off our allegiance to him, whose loving-kindness is new unto us every morning, and his faithfulness every evening. He has loved us, and pitied us, and redeemed us. He has promised to guide and to defend us while we sojourn in this wilderness, and beyond the precincts of this passing scene he has prepared everlasting habitations, and endless joys, for all who will now trust and follow him. And yet though he is loading us with the gifts of his bounty, and pleading with us to receive the riches of his grace, how soon do we forget his benefits, how indifferent are we to those spiritual mercies which have been so dearly purchased, and are so freely offered to us. O that God would so open our eyes, that we might see our guilty condition, and to renew our hearts, that they may be pervaded with the desire and the hope of eternal life; then should we return to him from whom we have so fatally departed, and joyfully live in subjection to the Father of our spirits.

Bitter was the sorrow of David for the loss of his offending son, and probably his grief was the more bitter, that it reminded him of his own guilt, and that he saw in it the punishment of his own sin. He

had 'despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight;' and thus provoking the Lord to wrath, he brought against himself the denunciation, 'the sword shall never depart from thine house.' He must have seen the fulfilment of the divine prediction, and felt the infliction of divine punishment, in this unnatural rebellion which had been raised against him, and this must have increased that flood of tears which flowed, when he went up to his chamber weeping, and saying, 'O Absalom, my son, my son.' He that would escape sorrow, must strive to shun sin, for whosoever committeth iniquity, sinneth against the Lord, and assuredly his sin shall find him out.

PRAYER.

Most merciful and gracious God, we would draw near unto thee through that new and living way which thou hast opened up, and we would lay on thine altar the sacrifice of thanksgiving for all the blessings of thy goodness. We bless thy name that thou hast preserved us during the past night, and raised us up in health and comfort to the light of another day. Let us never forget that it was by thy power we were created, that it is by thy providence we are sustained, that thou art the God of our lives, and the length of our days. We would look to thee as the Sovereign of the universe, and pray to be kept in subjection to the Father of our spirits. We would bear in mind that thou hast not only called us into being, but hast appointed us our place in the world; and in whatever situation we are, may we learn therewith to be content. May we not set our affections unduly on the things of this world, the fashion of which passeth away; but may we be daily laying up our treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, but where peace and happiness for ever reign. We have wickedly cast off our allegiance, and lifted against thee a rebellious arm, and had mercy not rejoiced against judgment, we must now have been associated with those apostate spirits that are reserved in chains of darkness, till the judgment of the great day. But blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. As his professed disciples, may we be enabled to forsake all and follow him. Quicken us, O Lord, by thy Spirit, that we may be alive unto thee; revive us by thy grace, that we may live a life of faith on the Son of thy love. Establish our hearts in thy fear, and guide our feet in the way of thy commandments; then shall we advance in the path of the divine life, and attain a meetness for the inheritance of

the saints in light. O keep us back from presumptuous sins, cleanse us from secret faults, and make us to know, in our happy experience, the peace of those who love thy holy law. Give us that fear which is the beginning of wisdom, and that love which is the fulfilling of the law, and that charity which is the bond of perfectness, and all those graces which are the fruit of the Spirit, that we may show out of a good conversation the power of the gospel in renewing the heart, and regulating the conduct of the true believer. And when at last the time shall come, that thou wilt take down the earthly house of this our tabernacle, may we be found ready to enter into the habitation prepared for the faithful, even that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Take us under thy special protection this day. Wherever we are, and whatever we do, may we set the Lord before us, knowing that to thee we must at last give an account. We pray thee, to bless all whom we should remember at a throne of grace. Bless our friends, reward our benefactors, and forgive our enemies. And now we plead that thou wouldest hear our prayers and accept our sacrifice, through him whom thou hearest always, and in whom thou art ever well-pleased, our strength, and our Redeemer. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXIII.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN X.

REMARKS.

How delightful the character of Christ as the Shepherd of his people, the good Shepherd who giveth his life for his sheep. Think of the security of that fold into which Christ has brought his chosen. Around this, every enemy may rage, but into it satan himself shall not enter, though he were 'transformed into an angel of light.' Think of the happy condition of the household of faith, when they are superintended by him who possesses all power, and in whom dwells all fulness. He feeds his people like a flock, he leads them beside the still waters, and makes them lie down in green pastures. He strengthens the weak, comforts the sorrowful, and speaks peace to those that are troubled in spirit. He is touched with a fellow-feeling of all their infirmities, and he is ever ready to succour them that are tempted. And all this care and kindness is but preparatory to the higher gifts of his grace, when he shall bring them to the full enjoyment of that eternal life which is their promised portion. Blessed are those who can truly say, The Lord is my shepherd, and who in the exercise of a faith that has a good foundation, and in the possession of a hope that maketh not ashamed, are looking beyond this transi-

tory scene, and seeking after the rest that remains to the people of God. He who came to give life to his followers, will feed such with heavenly bread, and make them meet for celestial blessedness.

These doctrines of our Saviour were not understood, and not believed, by the blind and bigoted Jews, and hence some said that he 'is mad,' and others that he 'hath a devil.' They are still despised and rejected by ignorant and ungodly men, but no enmity, and no opposition, can change the recorded decree, or affect the revealed truth, 'no man cometh unto the Father, but by the Son.' He is the door, and by him we must enter in, if we would be true members of that church of which he is the head, or subjects of that spiritual kingdom of which he is the ruler. This suggests a reflection of solemn import to all such as have been invested with the sacred office of the ministry, for it tests the motives from which they have sought, and the end for which they have coveted such an honour. And woe unto that man who has taken upon himself the responsibility of an ambassador, destitute of true love to his heavenly Master, and who is not willing to 'spend and be spent,' in winning souls unto Christ. What shall be the fate of such a wicked servant on that day, when the Lord shall say unto him, Give an account of thy stewardship! But it loudly calls on every professing disciple to ascertain the reality of his faith, that he may know what is the ground of his confidence, and the hope of his calling. The character of Christ's sheep, as given by himself, is this, that they follow him. They know his voice, they respect his authority, they submit to his directions. They know this to be both their duty and their safety, and they walk in the way which he points out. Such then as have a relish for divine things, and are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, have within their hearts the graces of the Spirit, and belong to that fold over which the good Shepherd watches with unwearied care and inexpressible tenderness. And O how great the peace, and how glorious the prospect of those, who have been enabled, through grace, to take up their cross and follow Christ! Trials and tribulations they may have to endure in the wilderness, but these will have an end, and when the fight of faith is over, the reward of victory will come. He who now calls them to watchfulness and steadfastness, will soon call them to join the redeemed in the land of uprightness and rest; where, with beatific visions of the divine glory, and sensible communications of divine love, they shall have fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore. The children of Zion may be joyful in their King, for he will defend them against all their enemies; he will deliver them out of all their temptations, he will purify them from all their guilt, and put them in everlasting possession of that heritage which is the portion of his people.

PRAYER.

We desire, O Lord, to draw near unto thee, believing that thou art, and that thou art the rewarder of them that diligently seek thee. We desire to worship thee as the former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits; as the God

of our lives, and the length of our days. We have nothing which we have not received, and we can hope for nothing which comes not from above. We would bless thee for the mercies of the past day. Thou hast supplied our wants. Thou hast defended us from danger. Thou art the author of every good and perfect gift. We would especially magnify thy name for the hope to which we are begotten through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. We desire to rest in his merits, and rejoice in his mediation; for he is the good Shepherd that has given his life for his sheep, and he is able and willing to save unto the uttermost all that come unto thee through him. He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and the gift of eternal life he will bestow on as many as believe on his name. We pray thee to unite us to him by that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Let not sin reign in our mortal bodies, but let Christ be formed in our hearts the hope of glory; that we may be found walking before thee, blameless and without rebuke. Enable us to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. Of ourselves we are insufficient for any thing that is good; but we would rest in the promise of heavenly aid, and even glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may be made manifest in us. O let us be sanctified by thy truth, and guided by thy Spirit, and upheld by thine Almighty arm; then shall we triumph over every spiritual enemy, and be made meet for joining those who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises. We bless thee for the instructions and consolations of thy holy word, and for the discoveries thou hast given us of thy character, and the promises thou hast made of thy grace in this message of love and peace. Enlighten our minds that we may understand its lessons, renew our hearts that we may walk in the way of its commandments, and prepare us for the full and final enjoyment of all those blessings which are the certain heritage of the true believer. We desire to cast on thy mercy, and commit to thy love, all whom we should remember when we approach a throne of grace. May he, of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named, bless every family and every individual who belongs to the household of faith. And may those who are still afar off, be brought nigh through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Thou art a God of compassion, and we commend unto thee, those who are afflicted in body and wounded in spirit. And grant that those who are approaching the gates of death, may be drawing

near the land of their eternal rest. We beseech thee to take us all under thy protection this night. Refresh our bodies with rest, and our spirits with the communications of heavenly love, and if it be thy blessed will that we see the light of another day, may we be prepared for its trials and its duties, by the direction and aid that cometh from above; and all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLIV.

SCRIPTURE—2 SAMUEL XXI.

REMARKS.

Sin has entailed on man present evil, as well as exposed him to future punishment. And we should remember that God is not only a just God, and will punish iniquity, but that he is a jealous God, and will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. This is his own declaration, and is not only true, but has been often verified in the dispensations of his providence. What calamities have been brought upon a nation by the unprincipled ambition, oppressive acts, and impious conduct of a wicked king! What misery and wretchedness have been entailed on a family by the profligate habits and the unchristian deportment of an ungodly parent! The history of Saul may be quoted as an example and illustration of these truths. He was anointed captain over the Lord's inheritance, but he forgot him by whom 'kings reign, and princes decree justice,' and much did his subjects suffer while he was permitted to sway the sceptre of Israel. But long after he was gathered to his fathers, and when by men his acts and iniquities were forgotten, the Lord visited their national sin with a famine, which lasted for the period of three years. Alarmed by this judgment, David inquired of the Lord the cause of this controversy with his people. 'And the Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.' Many years had passed away since, in violation of personal honour and public faith, Saul had committed this guilty deed, against those who were living in peace and security under the protection of a national covenant. But it still remained as a debt against the house of Israel, and they must yet suffer for their sins. Seven men, of the sons of Saul, are demanded as an expiation for this offence, and they are delivered up by the king of Israel, that, atonement being made by their death, the Lord may turn from his anger, and look again with affection on his heritage. We cannot doubt that David was directed by divine wisdom in this matter, far less can we doubt 'that the word of the Lord is right, and all his works are done in truth.' The judgments of God are a great deep, and we cannot fathom the doings of him who is 'wonderful in counsel.' But he makes manifest, in all his dispensations and dealings with men, that 'the wages of sin is death.'

We sympathize with aged Rizpah, who gave such evidence of her affection and her grief for her lost sons, that making the rock her couch, and sackcloth her covering, she watched their lifeless bodies, that they might not be touched by the beasts of the field or the birds of the air. We give the tribute of pity and admiration to such an expression of maternal love; but surely it should suggest to us the higher and the holier duty of watching over the spirits of all that are dear to us, that they be not involved in the terrors of the second death. We sin heedlessly, and we forget the iniquities we have committed, but they are all noted in that book of remembrance which shall be opened on the day of reckoning, and which shall be found to contain a fearful account against those who have not washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. That day is hastening on to all, it is drawing near to some, and it is high time that we should awake to righteousness, and sin not. The fountain is still open that will cleanse us from our guilt, the assistance is still promised that will enable us to ascend the holy hill of God, and the light is still seen that guides along the 'narrow way' to the joys of the invisible city. This should quicken and encourage us in the work given us to do, and keep us from contracting the guilt of those who sin more freely because grace has abounded. It is on the Lord's strength, as well as on the Lord's mercy, that we must rely, for it is he alone that can break the bonds of our captivity, and make us stand in the liberty of Christ. And if we but desire and plead earnestly for this spiritual freedom, he will give us the necessary power for meeting every trial, and overcoming every temptation, and we shall be more than conquerors through him who has loved us.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we adore thee as the sovereign and righteous ruler of the universe. By the dispensations of thy providence, and by the declarations of thy word, thou hast taught us that it is an evil and bitter thing to forsake the Lord our God, and still our delight has been in the pleasures and service of sin. But we rejoice to know that there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared, and plentiful redemption that thou mayest be sought after. We praise thy name that thou hast opened up a fountain for sin and for uncleanness, and that thou hast invited all who will to repair thither, that they may be purified from their guilt. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and we pray that, for his sake, thou wouldst create within us clean hearts, and renew within us right spirits. O create us after thine own image, in righteousness and true holiness. We come before thee according to thy commandment, and we wait for a Father's blessing. Grant unto us the attainment of personal holiness; bestow on us the gift of domestic peace;

and, not only united by the ties of natural affection, but by the bond of Christian love, may we have the well-founded hope of being associated together, when the ransomed of the Lord shall enter on their incorruptible inheritance, and when, in thy presence, they shall have fullness of joy. While we live in the world, may we live as members of the household of faith, as children of the family of adoption, and as heirs of the heavenly inheritance, that thus washed, and justified, and sanctified, we may be prepared for joining the spirits of the just made perfect in the land of uprightness and rest. Make us grateful for the privileges we enjoy, make us diligent in the use of the means we possess, and make us ready for the change that awaits all living, then shall we be enabled to say with thy servant, For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. We desire to make supplication for all men. Awaken the thoughtless to a sense of their danger; arrest the wicked in their guilty career; and give light and strength to those who are asking the way Zion-ward. Have compassion on the afflicted, impart consolation to the mourner, and prepare the dying for a happy immortality. Let our friends be blessed with thy favour, and our enemies experience thy forgiving mercy. And now, O Lord, we commit ourselves and all that is dear unto us to thy fatherly care. While we enter on the duties of this day, let a sense of thy presence restrain us from sin, and quicken us in every good work; and let nothing separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXI.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XI. 1—29.

REMARKS.

In the distress of this affectionate family they send a message to Him who never heard the cry of the afflicted in vain. Yet he seemed to have forgotten and neglected them. Great was their bereavement, in the loss of one to whom they were so strongly attached, but it would add bitterness to their grief that they seemed forgotten and forsaken by that friend in whose constancy and kindness they placed the firmest reliance.

This delay was the cause of momentary sorrow to them, but it has been the cause of permanent joy and gladness to many thousands since that period. There was a purpose of love and mercy in this procedure of the Saviour, because it was to prepare the way for a manifestation of divine power, which should

be the foundation of faith and hope to believers until the end of the world. He was to show his disciples that he possessed the attribute of omnipotence, and, by recalling the departed spirit, convince them that his empire had no limit, seeing that the dead heard his voice, and were quickened by his word. All doubt was removed of the actual decease of Lazarus, by the fact of his having lain four days in the grave, and there could be no disputing that the agency was divine which raised the dead from the chambers of corruption.

The mourners see that the Lord is not only from God, but that he is God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. And the consolation which this enlarged and enlightened view of his character imparted, was beyond all that words can express. When they knew that the attributes of power, wisdom, love, and mercy belonged to him for whom they felt so strong an attachment, and in whom they reposed such an undoubting confidence, they sorrowed not as those that have no hope. They felt satisfied that, if he guarded his own as the apple of his eye, precious in his sight must be the death of his saints, and that their departed friend must be safe and happy in the keeping of him who is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

And such must ever be the resignation and peace of those who know the character, and can trust the love of him who came to seek and to save us. Death is accompanied with much that must ever fill the mind of man with anxiety and disquietude, for it implies the breaking of ties which cannot be dissolved without pain and grief. But unspeakable is the consolation of that voice which is heard from above, saying, I will ransom thee from the power of the grave, I will redeem thee from the bonds of death. 'O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction.' Such is the voice which every believer hears, and such the consolation which every true disciple experiences. When we can look to Jesus as the appointed Messiah, and rely on him as the resurrection and the life, we can witness the departure of our friends with hope, and we can contemplate our own dissolution without dismay. In some respects there is, in this world, one event to the righteous and the wicked, and we see that sorrow and separation are the lot of all who live. But, beyond the precincts of this passing scene, there is a land from which every cause of grief and trouble is excluded, and where the purest happiness shall be for ever enjoyed. This is the kingdom which Christ came to purchase, it is the inheritance which he ascended to prepare, and it is the portion he shall bestow on his people, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in them that believe.

PRAYER.

How excellent, O Lord, is thy name in all the earth! Thou hast set thy glory above the heavens. Thou alone art worthy to receive all blessing, and honour, and glory, and praise, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. We bless thee that thou hast

opened up a way of access into the holiest of all, and that we have the privilege of drawing near unto thee, through him who is the way, and the truth, and the life. Great, O Lord, is thy goodness, and thy tender mercy is over all thy works. Thy loving-kindness is new unto us every morning, and thy faithfulness every evening, and what shall we render unto thee for all thy benefits? We desire to offer unto thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving for the daily gifts of thy providence, for thou hast watched over us with a tender care, and supplied our wants with a liberal hand, and it is because thou art kind and of long-suffering patience that we are still in the land of the living and the place of hope. But we would especially adore thy love and thy compassion, as manifested in the gift of thy well-beloved Son. We bless thee, that through the Lord our righteousness thou hast redeemed us from the captivity of sin, and ransomed us from the power of the grave, and raised us to the honour and the hope of those who are sons of God, and heirs together of the grace of life. May we live mindful of the shortness and uncertainty of time, knowing that here we have no continuing city, and may we be making daily and active preparation for that change which will call us away from the place we now occupy. It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death cometh the judgment; but we rejoice to know that he on whom our help has been laid, is the resurrection and the life, and that all who sleep in Jesus shall be raised up, by divine power, to the possession of a life that shall never end, and to the enjoyment of a happiness that shall never be interrupted. Let this hope soothe our sorrows, and purify our affections, and elevate our desires, and quicken our diligence, that through the means of grace we may attain that holiness necessary for the enjoyment of the heavenly kingdom. As partakers of a holy calling, and candidates for an immortal prize, may our affections not be on this world, but on those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; that thus filled with the Spirit, and animated with the hope of another and a better country, we may go on our Christian way rejoicing. Let the promise of a coming redemption inspire us with fortitude, and patience, and resignation amidst the sorrows and trials that abound in the land of our pilgrimage, knowing that the end of all such troubles are at hand, for in the paradise above there shall be fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. It becomes us to acknowledge thy goodness to us in all that we daily enjoy; and we desire to commit our-

selves to thy care during the silent watches of this night. If thou art pleased to spare us to the light of another day, O prepare us for the enjoyment of its privileges, and the performance of its duties. May we hallow thy sabbath, may we encompass thine altar, and may we know, in our happy experience, that it is a good thing for us to wait on thee in all the ordinances of thine appointment. May the word of thy grace and the services of thy temple be blessed for our spiritual improvement, that ours may be the path of the just, which, like the morning light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day. We pray for the speedy arrival of that time when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea. Give unto thy Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession, that all nations may see thy salvation, and every people call him blessed. Hear us in behalf of all for whom we should pray. Thou knowest their condition, in mercy supply their every want. We wait for thy promised blessing,—lift upon us the light of thy countenance, and give us peace, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXVII.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS LXVI. LXVII.

REMARKS.

PSALM LXVI. This psalm seems to have been written by David immediately after some signal deliverance had been effected for himself and his people. Jehovah had strengthened and comforted him in his trouble, and in due time had granted to him deliverance. The psalmist seems to have been rightly exercised under affliction; for his heart is deeply affected with a sense of the divine goodness towards him, and out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. He calls upon all men to honour God the Saviour, and to consider gratefully the mighty works done by him for Israel's salvation in former times.

Whilst the psalmist thus speaks of the gracious workings of Jehovah towards his people generally, the fire of gratitude for personal and precious blessings glows in his bosom, and he expresses a holy resolution to pay, in the house of God, and in the presence of all God's people, the vows which his mouth had uttered in the time of trouble. Let us, while we read these pious and grateful breathings of the sweet singer of Israel, seek that our hearts be affected as his, by the goodness of the Lord towards us. Let us remember all the way through which

he has led us, and resolve by his grace to dedicate our preserved lives and our ransomed souls to his honour and service.

PSALM LXVII. This is one of the most beautiful of those inspired songs, in which the ancient church was wont to celebrate the praises of her God and King; to profess her faith in the promises of the Messiah, and to express her earnest desire for their accomplishment. It refers almost entirely to the advent of Christ. This is the mercy promised to the fathers, so ardently implored in the commencement of the psalm.

Great benevolence characterizes this prayer of the church. She seeks this mercy and blessing, this light of God's countenance, not for herself alone, but in order that (ver. 2.) God's way of pardoning and blessing the guilty may be known over the whole earth, and 'his saving health,' that is, his free, and full, and everlasting salvation, preached to all the nations of the world; in the spirit of purest benevolence, God's own people earnestly supplicate the coming of the promised Saviour, in order that the men of every land may be glad and sing for joy, under the peaceful, just, and merciful reign of Messiah the Prince.

Zeal for Jehovah's honour and glory also characterizes this beautiful prayer of the church; she seeks that multitudes besides the inhabitants of favoured Judea, (ver. 3—7.) should be brought to acknowledge Jehovah as their God: yea, that all the people of all lands should be made to worship and praise him.

The prayer of this psalm has, in part, long since been answered. In the fulness of time, Messiah, the Hope of Israel, appeared in the world, full of grace and truth; and having finished the work given him to do as Israel's Saviour, he commissioned his servants to go and preach the gospel of salvation to every creature. Since his own time, mercy and forgiveness have been proclaimed in his name to many a Gentile land, and by means of his gospel many immortal souls, in every generation, have been quickened to bring forth fruit unto holiness. And this prayer of the ancient church is being answered still, in this remote land of the Gentiles, and in many other Gentile nations: it shall continue to be answered till all nations praise God, and all the ends of the earth fear him. Let us seek to possess and cherish the benevolent and pious spirit which this psalm exhibits; and while we pray for the extension of the knowledge of Christ, let us use all our influence, and cheerfully expend our means, in order that God's ways may be made known to the poor and ignorant at home, and his saving health revealed to the multitudes of perishing souls in heathen lands.

PRAYER.

Our Father which art in heaven, grant unto us, for the sake of thy dear Son, the gift of thy Holy Spirit, that we may worship thee who art a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. Quicken us, O Lord; our souls cleave to the dust. Cause that while we are expressing the words of devotion, our hearts may be devout. Holy Father,

we are unworthy to be called thy children. We have sinned against thee, and what can we answer, O thou preserver of men? Behold, God our shield, look upon us in the face of Jesus, thine Anointed. Blessed be thy name, that thou hast sent him into the world, to obey, and suffer, and die for us, and that thou hast revealed him unto us, as the way, the truth, and the life; the only and the all-sufficient Saviour. Our eyes have seen, and our ears have heard, what prophets and wise men desired to see and hear, but were not permitted. Our ears have heard the glad tidings of a perfect salvation, provided in Christ Jesus, for the very chief of sinners, and we trust that by faith our eyes have seen Jesus as our own ever living and ever gracious friend. What can we render unto thee, O Lord, for all thy goodness to our souls? We bless thee, for all we have received of thy kindness, in the days that are past; for all the warnings, and reproofs, and consolations of thy good Spirit; for all the instructions and comforts of thy holy word; and for all the care and watchfulness of thine adorable providence. We bless thy name for the means of grace, and especially for the opportunity which this day affords of going up into thy house to worship thee, and hear thy message of peace. O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead us, let them bring us into thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will we go unto the altar of God, unto God, our exceeding joy. Bless Zion's provision every where this day, and send forth each of thy ministering servants to his people, in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ; so that this sabbath may be a great day of the Son of man, a day on which multitudes shall be added to the church of such as shall be saved, and all thy people built up in their holy faith. O Lord, have mercy on the lands where no sabbath is enjoyed, where no Saviour is known. Cause the light of thy gospel soon to shine upon them, that all nations may fear thee, and all people praise thee. Accompany with thine effectual blessing all the efforts of thy servants in heathen lands to bring men to the Saviour, and endow us with that spirit of holy benevolence which will not be satisfied till the saving knowledge of God be circulated over the whole earth. Be present with our friends and brethren in affliction. Make known to them the joys of thy salvation. Sanctify their troubles for the good of their souls. Forgive the thoughtless and irreligious in the midst of us. Bring them to a better mind, and by thy grace lead them to receive and rejoice in the Saviour, whom hitherto they have despised.

Again we implore thy favour and friendship for ourselves. Our hope is in thee, and our confidence in thy mercy. Never leave us, never forsake us. Deal bountifully with our souls, and graciously accept of us, and of our service, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXVIII. 18.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXVIII.

REMARKS.

The preceding psalm, which we read in the morning, is an ardent prayer of God's ancient people for Messiah's advent; this is a prophecy of Messiah's conquests, and of the precious and permanent benefits resulting from his finished and accepted work. It is one of the inspired songs which were primarily intended to celebrate the removal of the ark of God to the hill of Zion; on the occasion of this removal all Israel were glad, and ascended the holy mount of God singing of Jehovah's power and goodness, and of his triumphs over his own and his people's foes. But this joyful event was typical of a better thing to come; it was typical of the ascension of Jesus the divine Mediator into the heavenly Zion—the temple of the living God; and to celebrate this glorious event was the prophetic design of the psalm before us. And surely if ancient Israel rejoiced in the removal of the ark, to the mount of which God had made choice—if they rejoiced because in this event they had the assurance of God's presence in the midst of them, to strengthen, and comfort, and defend them; much more may we rejoice that our Redeemer has returned to the world whence he came, that 'he hath ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.' This event is our infallible assurance that God the Holy Spirit will constantly dwell in our churches, in our families, in our hearts; for thus spake the Saviour, 'If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you, and he shall abide with you for ever.'

The resurrection and ascension of our blessed Lord, are the great proof of Jehovah's acceptance of his mediation. 'He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name,' and put all power and authority under him. It is therefore, because of our Lord's ascension into heaven, that all the predictions of this psalm are, or shall be accomplished, and that all the rich and glorious blessings of his salvation, and especially the gift of his Holy Spirit, are bestowed on the church, and that all nations shall serve him. It is because Jesus has been received up into heaven as his people's glorified Mediator, that all his elect, of every generation, and of every country, shall come unto him, that all the tribes from the fountain of Israel, (ver. 26—35.)

Benjamin and Judah, Zebulun and Naphtali, now perishing in unbelief, shall embrace the Messiah, and the fulness of the Gentile nations be given unto him for his inheritance: Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God, and princes shall come to him out of Egypt; all kingdoms shall sing unto God, to him that rideth on the heaven, to the God of Israel, who giveth strength and power unto his people.

What a source of perpetual joy should the ascension of our blessed Lord be to us; he who loved us and gave himself for us, is in heaven receiving the reward of his vicarious obedience and death. 'If we loved him, we would rejoice because he hath gone to his Father.' He who died for our sins, is raised for our justification. He lives to carry on and perfect the salvation of his people, to instruct them by his word and Spirit, to intercede for them with his divine Father, to lead and defend them, to make all things work together for their good. Greater is he that is for us, than all that can be against us, and nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Seeing that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession, being in nothing terrified by our adversaries: and having such an High Priest who is also a king upon his throne, our King and Saviour, let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

PRAYER.

Most merciful Saviour! behold from heaven thy dwelling-place, us thine unworthy worshippers, and give ear to the voice of our supplications. Thou art crowned with glory and honour, adored by all the hosts of heaven; thou art King of kings, and Lord of lords, God over all, and blessed for ever. Blessed be thy great and glorious name, that we are permitted and invited to address thee as our Lord, and that thou hast bidden us ask any thing from thee, with the assurance that thou wilt bestow it upon us. O Lord, give us for thine own name's sake, of those gifts which thou hast received for rebellious men; give us, we entreat thee, that faith without which it is impossible to please God, that evangelical repentance, without which we must perish, that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. Give us, we beseech thee, thy Holy Spirit of promise, that all these graces may be implanted and flourish in our souls, and that we may be built up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation. Give us, O Lord, the portion of thy redeemed family, the bread of life which thy children eat, the hopes which thy children cherish, the character which thy children exhibit, the honours with which thy children are crowned, the heaven in which thy children shall dwell for ever. Gracious Lord, we ask all these things believing; for thy mercy and truth's sake bestow them upon us. God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, we bless thee that thou hast raised him up, and given him glory that our faith and hope might be in thee. We believe that thou art reconciled to us through the merits of thy Son, and we hope in thy faithfulness, and goodness, and justice, and power, in him. O let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand; upon the Son of man, whom thou madest strong for thyself, so will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Heavenly Father, we bless thee for thy great goodness manifested to thy church on this day of the Son of man. Thou hast given the word, and great has been the company of them that published it in our own and in other lands. Let thy Spirit descend upon it, as the rain and the dew from heaven, that by means of it thy weary heritage may be refreshed again. Do thou especially bless thy word addressed to us; enable us to receive it as the word of God, which is able to save our souls. Bless thy ministering servant who was this day the helper of our faith and joy in the Holy Ghost; strengthen his hands, and encourage his heart, and make him a great blessing to us, and all that worship with us. Gracious Lord, forgive the sin of our holy things, of unworthy hearing, of the want of suitable interest in the great things which belong to our peace. Bless the whole church of Christ upon the earth; add to her daily such as shall be saved. Bless the poor and friendless, the diseased and the dying; supply their wants and save their souls. Protect us during the night; if thou art pleased to spare us, go with us into the duties of the week. Let the love of Christ constrain us to live in all things, not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and who rose again. Hear, answer, and accept of us, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM xxxvii. 37.

SCRIPTURE—2 SAMUEL xxiii.

REMARKS.

The first seven verses of this chapter contain the last or dying words of David, the king of Israel; the last words of one who was called of God to occupy a very distinguished place in his church and in the world; of a man eminently characterized by talents consecrated to the service of the Most High. We are anxious to know the last words of a good man, to know what were his sentiments in the hour of death, and in the immediate prospect of eternity; to know what were his consolations, and desires, and

hopes, while the world was receding from him, while his body was about to return to the dust, and his spirit to God who gave it. And what were David's dying words? He does not speak of the good he had done in the world, of the glory he had won for himself in the battles of the Lord, or of his zeal for Jehovah's honour or Jehovah's house. He speaks of himself, indeed, but it is with unfeigned humility and gratitude. He remembers his lowly origin as the son of the shepherd Jesse, and ascribes all his exaltation to the sovereign kindness of Israel's God, ver. 1, 2. He remembers that he had furnished the church with her sweetest songs of praise, but he acknowledges that all their beauty and richness of devotion were the inspiration of God's own Spirit; that he was no more than the honoured instrument whom the God of Jacob employed to speak and write for the benefit of the redeemed in all ages. His dying sentiment, regarding all he had attained and all he had done was, 'Not I, but the grace of God which was given me.'

And while David, on his dying bed, remembers the past with humility and gratitude, he anticipates the future with glowing delight. Under the illuminating influences of God's Spirit, he foresees and foretells the advent of the Messiah, (ver. 3, 4.) and his pious soul labours for images to show forth the glory and blessedness of Messiah's reign. Thus may his words be rendered: 'The governor of men shall be the Just One, ruling in the fear of the Lord.' He who is coming to rule over Israel, to rule over all nations, is holy, just, and good, and his laws and ordinances shall partake of his own character, and be promotive only of righteousness in the fear of God. How blissful the results of his appearing? 'He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth; even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.' Just as the light of the sun, in a cloudless morning, chases away all the shadows of the gloomy night, so does David foresee, at Messiah's coming, all spiritual, and moral, and penal darkness disappear from round about God's people, the Sun of righteousness shining over them, and the Light of the world dwelling in the midst of them; and just as the softening showers refresh and beautify the earth, which long-continued drought has withered, so does dying David foresee the moral desert affected by the coming of the Saviour. It is made to blossom as the rose, and to bring forth fruit to the praise of God's grace.

And how happy in his own soul does dying David appear! He has an interest in God's everlasting and well-ordered covenant. David knew this, and in his dying moments he exults, saying, 'What need I more: God is my portion and heaven is my home; this is all my salvation and all my desire.'

But David, in his last moments, also gives a testimony against the foes of God, and of their miserable destruction at last.

What a beautiful illustration does the death-bed of David, as exhibited in these verses, afford of his own saying in Psalm xxxvii. 'Mark thou the perfect and behold the upright, for the latter end of that man is peace.' How peaceful, how hopeful, how happy was

the latter end of David! Are we interested in that covenant which was all his salvation and all his desire? Nothing else can comfort us in the near prospect of dissolution. O then, let each one of us obey the voice of God when he says to us, 'Incline your ear and come unto me: hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.'

The remaining part of the chapter (ver. 8—39.) is occupied with a list of the mighty men who figured in the court and camp of David. They are classified according to the daring and greatness of their exploits. David, we know, was an eminent type of the Messiah, and perhaps the Spirit of God has preserved the names of David's warriors, and recorded their deeds as types of the soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when we read of their valour in David's cause, and of the honours given them in the records of truth, we should seek to have our names written in heaven, as followers of the great Captain of salvation.

PRAYER.

O God, thou art our God, and we will praise thee; thou art our fathers' God, and we will exalt thee; thou art the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we will magnify thy name together. We bless thee for all thy loving-kindness and tender mercy towards us. We are guilty, and merit nothing but thine everlasting displeasure; we are depraved, and cannot serve thee or love thee as we ought. Yet hast thou been favourable to us, and loved us freely. We bless thee for the salvation which is in Christ Jesus thy Son. We bless thee that he, in the prospect of whose coming dying David rejoiced, hath appeared, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Gracious Father, interest each one of us in his obedience and death, that we may have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. Enable us to lay hold of that covenant of which he is the mediator, thine own everlasting covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure. Give us grace to submit ourselves to the authority of him who is the Just One, to make his law our delight and our study all the day, and to have it for our meat and our drink to do his holy will. We praise thee, O God, for the light of another morning, and for the rest and refreshment of the past night. We bless thee for all the instruction, and consolation, and reproof addressed to us yesterday in the house of prayer, and for all the precious blessings of the Christian sabbath. We beseech thee let not thy word return unto thee void. Cause it to prosper in the thing wherefore thou hast sent it, and to be unto us the savour of life unto life. Keep us in thy fear all the day long. Whether we are in the house or by the way, whether we are mingling with our brethren, or walking in solitude, may we cherish the sen-

timent, Thou God seest us, and do all things honestly as in the sight of all men. While we are diligent in business, make us fervent in spirit, serving thee. Father of all the families of the earth, bless our family and friends; lift the light of thy countenance upon them, and be gracious unto them. Grant, O Lord, that all who are our relatives may be the friends of Christ, and heirs of his everlasting kingdom. We beseech thee to visit in mercy our afflicted brethren, and to pour the balm of thy consolation into every grieved soul. Let thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. O let the people praise thee, let all the people praise thee. We beseech thee, keep our hearts in the love of God, and preserve us to thy kingdom and glory. Mercifully forgive our sins, and hear our prayers, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XVI. 8.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XI. 30—57.

REMARKS.

In the morning we read the last words of David, an eminent servant of God, and we saw in them the peace and hope which an assured interest in the covenant of grace can impart to the soul in the immediate prospect of death. In this chapter we read of the death of Lazarus of Bethany, another holy man, but we are not told what were his dying words. Circumstances like this are not uncommon in the Bible. The Spirit of God has recorded the dying sayings of Jacob, of Moses, of David, and of Stephen, the first martyr for Christ, while he has given us no record of the last words of Abraham, or of Joshua, or of the apostle Paul. This difference, which at first sight seems accidental, may be designed by the Holy Spirit for the comfort of many who wait around the dying beds of Christian friends. From some of these beds we will hear the language of holy rapture, from others expressions of calm resignation and humble hope, but in other cases the lips of our departing Christian friends may, from the nature of their disease, be sealed in silence, or from the temporary hidings of God's countenance, they may express painful doubt and anxiety, or what is more distressing still, from their tongues may flow words of raving incoherence and folly. But let not Christians be amazed in such circumstances; the last words of only a few of God's saints are recorded, and these are fraught with comfort and instruction to us; of Lazarus and the rest of God's servants we know not but that they exhibited, though God was graciously present with them all in the moments of dissolution, the same silence, or the same fears, or the same disordered reason which our dying friends exhibit.

Jesus the Saviour was now (ver. 30—44.) near the grave of his friend Lazarus, and what compas-

sion, and piety, and majesty manifested themselves in him! What compassion! He mingled his tears with those of the bereaved sisters; 'Jesus groaned in spirit and wept:' he wept in sympathy of their grief: he wept at the sight of the suffering and anguish which sin had spread even among his own people: he wept when he saw the sweetest of man's earthly affections made, by reason of sin, the source of their bitterest woes. What piety! As the servant of the Father, Jesus humbly acknowledged the sovereignty of God, and his heart sent up to heaven its breathings of gratitude for the possession of that power about to be exercised for his own glory. What majesty also appeared in the Son of God! He stood by a grave upon whose tenant the fearful process of putrefaction had begun. He stood there in the consciousness of almighty power, ready to quicken the cold clay, to summon back the departed spirit from its unseen habitation, and to cause it to enter again the tabernacle it had forsaken. He stood by the grave in which Lazarus lay a cold and putrid corpse, and, with the full assurance of being obeyed, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth,' and the spirit of Lazarus, in the eternal world, heard his voice, and the cold dust in the grave obeyed it.

We are not told the effect of this miracle of love upon the minds of Martha and Mary; no doubt though lately burdened with a weight of sorrow, they were now oppressed with excess of joy. At such a moment their hearts must have been too full for utterance, and so the Spirit of God has given us no account of their feelings. But the effects of the miracle upon several classes of the spectators are mentioned, (ver. 45—50.) 'Many of them believed in Christ, when they had seen the things which he did.' It was good for them that they came to the house of mourning, for the Spirit of God, working by the miracles which Christ did, and the words which he spoke there, produced saving faith in their souls, and made them new creatures. But to others this manifestation of Christ's power and grace was only the savour of death unto death; they went from the exhibition in malignant unbelief, to expose the Son of God to the increased hatred of his enemies. O the depravity of man's heart! Miracles and signs cannot subdue it: nothing can, save the almighty working of God's own Spirit.

That compassionate and mighty Saviour who loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus, who honoured their house with his company, and who was their help in time of trouble, now addresses us by his Spirit in his word, saying, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.' Let us say unto him, 'Come in, thou blessed of the Lord,' and he will dwell in our hearts, and be with us in all our personal and domestic afflictions to comfort and strengthen us, and he will go with us through the dark valley of the shadow of death, and he will raise us up again in glory at the last day.

PRAYER.

God of all grace and Father of consolation, we come before thee acknowledging that sin has

been our ruin; that because of sin, the abominable thing which thou hatest, we suffer, and die, and are liable to thine everlasting displeasure. Have mercy upon us, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out our transgressions. We come before thee in the name of him whom thou hearest always, the sinner's surety and the sinner's friend. We bless thee because thou hast made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Gracious Father, unite each one of us to thy Son, by the faith which unites the soul to God, and the saints to one another. May our family be an emblem of the great family of the Redeemer in heaven, each member of which is accepted in the Beloved, and blessed in him for ever. We thank thee for all the comforts of the day which has closed upon us; that thou hast led us out and brought us in, not permitting any evil to come near us. We bless thee that thou hast not made our house a house of mourning; that we are all alive and in peace before thee. O so teach us to number our swiftly passing days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. When thou art pleased to afflict or bereave us, may Jesus, the comforter of his people, be our help and protection; and when we come to die, may he who raised Lazarus from the grave strengthen us against the fear of death, saying, Fear not, I will both go down with you and I will bring you up again. Have compassion upon those to whom thou hast appointed long nights and wearisome days of trouble; let their afflictions be for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby. Spare lives that are useful to families, to the world, or to the church. Our Father which art in heaven, bless all mankind. Be especially gracious to our relatives, and neighbours, and fellow-worshippers; grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied to them all. Keep thy good hand around us during the silence of the night. Prepare us for all that is prepared for us in the world; enable us to spend all the days of our sojourning here in thy fear, and to be looking for and hastening unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Graciously forgive our sins, and accept of us, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCL.

SCRIPTURE—2 SAMUEL XXIV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1. It is quite evident, both from the chapter before us, and from many other passages of the word of God, that nations have duties to perform in their collective capacity; and that by neglecting these, or by becoming generally corrupted and depraved, they may bring on themselves national judgments. Ver. 10. Confession of sin is essential to its forgiveness at the hand of God: not because it is at all necessary on his part, or has any merit in his sight; but because it is requisite as a means for bringing the sinner's mind into a fit state for receiving the blessing of pardon. Forgiveness is one of the many blessings contained in the gospel, the bestowment of which may be said to depend generally on the circumstance, that they are asked, according to the following most interesting passages in our Lord's sermon on the mount: 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.' Mat. vii. 7, 8. Ver. 14. The glory of God is, and ought to be, the chief end of all our thoughts, and words, and actions: so that, even in our punishments, if we have any control over them, we should choose that mode whereby the infinite and uncreated excellencies of the divine character will be manifested to the greatest extent in the view of his moral and intelligent creatures. Ver. 1. and 15. When the Almighty visits any large portion of the children of men with some mortal disease, it must be owing to sin, which is the cause of all suffering; for had our race never sinned, they never would have suffered either in this world, or in that which is to come. Ver. 24. As often as we are called, in the course of divine providence, to serve the Lord with our substance, we should avoid doing it with the property of our neighbour; for, if the sacrifice costs us nothing, we furnish no proof of our desire to devote ourselves to him, who is the author of our being, and the source of all our blessings.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

We should be constantly on our guard against sin, lest, by the displeasure of the Almighty, we be allowed to fall into any of those temptations which Satan has ever ready to present to us. If we discover that we have sinned against the Lord on any occasion, we should betake ourselves to 'the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.' Having acknowledged our transgression, and implored Jehovah to grant us the pardon of it, there can be no question that he will be faithful to his promises, and 'forgive the iniquity of our sin.' Though our sins be numerous and highly aggravated, we are assured, on the highest of all authority, that Jesus Christ is both able and willing 'to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for

them.' As often as we are exposed to 'the noisome pestilence,' and perceive that the arrows of death are flying thick around us, we should betake ourselves to him who is 'our rock and our fortress,' and he will deliver us from 'the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and from the destruction that wasteth at noonday.' While we 'abide under the shadow of the Almighty,' so completely will he be 'our shield and buckler,' that 'a thousand will fall at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand; but it will not come nigh us.' Continuing to put our trust in 'the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength,' he will fulfil to us the rich and precious promise, which he has fulfilled to his well-beloved Son, and which is described in the following terms: 'Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, we adore thee as the Supreme Disposer of all events. Thou hast arranged, and art directing, all things for the manifestation of thine own glory, and for the advancement of the best interests of all thy people. Though thou be seated upon a throne high and lifted up, yet we know that thou lookest down from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory, and beholdest the things that are done upon earth. We draw nigh unto thee, O God, at this time, earnestly beseeching thee, for the sake of Him whom thou hearest always, to lift upon us the light of thy countenance, and to visit us with thy great salvation. Bring us to a true sight and sense of our natural state of sin and misery. Show us the evil nature and infinite demerit of sin. Enable us, as perishing sinners, to lay hold on eternal life. May we be justified freely by thy grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. May we be adopted into thy family, and constituted the sons and the daughters of the Lord Almighty. May we be sanctified in soul, body, and spirit, by the operation and influence of thy Holy Spirit, and made fit in due time, for dwelling in the regions of everlasting purity and felicity. O God of our salvation, we learn from melancholy experience, that we are living in a world of sin, of suffering, and of sorrow. The king of terrors, in manifold ways, continues to commit ravages all around us. He is directing his shafts with unerring aim, and multitudes are daily and hourly cut off from the land of the living. Shield us, O Father of mercies, from the attacks of the destroyer, till we be prepared for quitting this mortal and changing scene, and for entering into a state of endless glory and felicity. May we be enabled to say with thy servant of old, O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy vic

tory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. And when we have fulfilled the high purposes of the moral government of God in this world, may we have an entrance ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Heavenly Father, we thank thee for watching over us during the past night. Watch over us, we entreat thee, during this day. Command thy richest blessings to descend on us, who are now worshipping before thee, and on all who are connected with us by whatever tie. Be our God and our guide continually, and our portion through all eternity. Bless abundantly the whole human race with the blessings of the gospel. and hasten that happy time, when thy will shall be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. These our humble supplications are now before thee. May they be heard and answered, and may we be accepted and blessed, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXVIII.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XII. 1—22.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 2. Hospitality is a duty which is incumbent on all the people of God. 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers,' says an inspired writer, 'for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.' In the instance recorded in the passage before us, the good family at Bethany entertained one who is infinitely greater than any created angel, being 'the Angel of the covenant,' the 'Lord of glory,' the second person of the glorious and ever blessed Trinity. Ver. 3—6. The great Head of the church is well pleased with his people, when they are led to make costly sacrifices of their substance for the advancement of his cause in the world,—sacrifices far greater than what are considered to be expedient by unrenowned men, who have only a form of godliness. When our blessed Lord was sitting at supper, 'Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard,' which, if Judas was correct in the estimation of its value, must have cost nearly ten pounds sterling, and 'she anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.' To this Judas objected as an useless expenditure of a very precious article, which, according to his opinion, might have been converted into money, and 'given to the poor;' and, in this respect, many persons agree with him in thinking that the temporal wants of the poor should be supplied, while nothing is to be done for promoting the well-being of their precious and immortal souls. Ver. 9—11. The performance of the greatest miracle is not sufficient to produce true

and saving faith in the soul. It must have been well-known to the great body of the Jewish nation, that our blessed Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead, for many flocked to see him. The chief priests, instead of receiving and acknowledging Jesus Christ to be the Messiah, in consequence of the wonderful work which he had performed, 'consulted how they might put Lazarus to death,' and thus deprive him of this proof of his divine mission. Ver. 12, 13. The acclamations of the multitude are often very short lived, for we find that many of the Jews 'took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet Jesus Christ,' when on his way to Jerusalem, and 'cried, Hosanna: blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.' And by way of contrast with this, we are informed that, a few days after, the common people, instigated by their rulers, cried out, 'crucify him, crucify him.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

We should, in all circumstances, endeavour, by divine grace, to imitate the example which our Lord and Saviour has set before us, in being careful to wait on God in all the ordinances of his appointment. Thus we find him, on the present occasion, travelling from beyond Jordan to the city of Jerusalem, that he might engage in the celebration of the passover, and might have an opportunity of instituting the holy ordinance of the supper; though he well knew that the Jews sought to take his life, and that he was to be subjected to the cursed and shameful death of the cross. So earnestly desirous was he to eat the passover, at this time, with his disciples, that he came to Bethany six days before the period when it was to be observed, thereby showing us that we are not to grudge the time which we spend in the service of God; because he is able to compensate us for the sacrifice by conferring on us blessings 'which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man.' We should be very careful to supply the wants of the poor and the needy, more especially those of them whom we believe to be heirs of grace and of glory; for we are informed that this is peculiarly acceptable to our divine Redeemer, and that he will most abundantly reward all such acts of benevolence, either in this world or in the world to come. But while we are attentive to promote the comfort of the destitute around us, by bestowing on them temporal blessings, we should seek above all things to secure their well-being in the eternal world, by providing them with the means of grace and salvation: and we should be prepared to give largely of our wealth for the accomplishment of this glorious object, because the soul of one sinner is far more valuable than a whole world of inanimate matter.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, and most merciful Father, we worship and adore thee as the first and the last, the greatest and the best of all beings. Thou art exalted inconceivably far above all blessing and all praise; for thou art the infinite, the eternal, and the unchangeable Jehovah, dwelling in light which is inaccessible and full of glory. Thy hap-

pineness and thy glory are independent of all the works which thou hast made: and thou standest in no need of the services even of the highest and holiest of those spirits that dwell with thee. Thou art the source of being and of blessedness to thy moral and intelligent creatures,—the giver of every good and every perfect gift. We desire at this time, most gracious God, to bless and to magnify thy holy name, for all thy goodness and loving-kindness unto us,—for all the bounties of thy providence, and for all the riches of thy grace. Bestow on us, we beseech thee, the good things of this present life in that measure which thou seest to be best for us, and most conducive to the manifestation of thy glory. And whilst thou art filling our hearts with food and gladness, O do thou make us partakers of all those great and glorious blessings, which our divine Redeemer came down from the mansions of glory to purchase and to bestow. May we be washed in the atoning blood, and clothed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and be permitted at last to join the blessed company of the redeemed in heaven, that we may celebrate the praises of the God of our salvation, in songs of gratitude and love, which shall have no end. O Lord, we thank thee for the various means of grace, and of spiritual improvement, which thou hast provided for us, and commanded us to employ. Enable us, we implore thee, to give diligence to make our calling and election sure, that we may make suitable and sufficient preparation for eternity. Holy Father, we would now express our gratitude to thee for that watchful care which thou hast exercised over us during this day. Continue, we beseech thee, to watch over us, in the silent watches of the night, with more than a parent's care. Permit us to see the light and the comforts of another day. And lead us to consider that every day which passes over our heads is bringing us a stage nearer to death and the grave. Lord, bless the whole of our family circle. Bless all our friends, and relations, and acquaintances; and forgive our enemies. Bless all the tribes and nations which are on the face of the earth. And all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXII.

SCRIPTURE—1 KINGS VI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Solomon's temple was a very remarkable type, and it may be said to have had a variety of antitypes. It was typical of Jesus Christ, and of his people, and

of the heavenly world: and we shall now notice some of the chief emblematical circumstances. The temple, in general, or as a whole, was typical of the human nature of Jesus Christ; for when Jehovah made the temple his habitation, this was intended to point out the wonderful fact which is recorded of the Son of God, when it is said, that 'in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' The temple was also typical of every true believer; for as the first person in the Godhead dwelt in the temple under the Old Testament dispensation, so the third person dwells in each of the heirs of grace, under the New Testament dispensation. We find the apostle Paul, in allusion to this fact, making the following appeal to the members of the church which was a Corinth, 'know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.' The temple was also typical of Jesus Christ and his people in a relative point of view; for he is the foundation, and they are the superstructure which is built upon it. In accordance with this statement, the great apostle of the Gentiles, addressing the saints which were at Ephesus, tells them that they were built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Moreover, the temple was typical of the heavenly world. Jehovah dwelt in the *shechinah*, or bright cloud, which was the symbol of his presence, and which was in the holy of holies in Solomon's temple; and this was designed to convey to us the idea that he 'dwells in light' which is inaccessible and full of glory, in the celestial world which he has fitted up with amazing splendour. The two cherubims, which were over the mercy-seat, represented the innumerable company of angelic spirits which surround God's throne, and minister in his presence, and execute his commands in every part of the universe. And the multitude of chambers which were in the temple were meant to point out those 'many mansions,' which the Redeemer tells his disciples were in his 'Father's house,' and which he has gone before to prepare for their reception.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

There are few ideas, we apprehend, which are calculated to make a deeper impression on our minds and to exert a greater influence in keeping us from the practice of sin, and in encouraging us to walk in the paths of holiness, than when we are represented as 'temples of the Holy Ghost.' It is a circumstance which is fitted to exert a considerable degree of moral influence on our conduct and character when we reflect that God is all-seeing and heart-searching,—that he is now our witness, and that he will ere long be our final and impartial judge. But when we have the distinct understanding that God is actually dwelling within us,—that he has constituted us living temples for his especial habitation,—and that he cannot look on sin but with abhorrence,—

we feel as if we were brought as near to the Almighty as we possibly can be, and that we ought to keep the strictest watch over all our thoughts, and words, and actions. This, too, is absolutely necessary, that we may obtain all the benefits which the inhabitation of the divine Spirit is fitted and intended to impart; for, if we grieve him by our misconduct, and constrain him to depart from us, it is impossible that we can be fitted for moving in a sphere of glory and felicity in the heavenly world, so very exalted as we might otherwise be. As the stones which were employed in the building of Solomon's temple were all prepared in the mountains before they were brought to Jerusalem, so we should be diligently using the means of being prepared, as living stones, for filling that place intended for us in the great spiritual temple, which is now being erected in the heavenly world, for celebrating the high praises of Jehovah through all eternity.

PRAYER.

O thou that dwellest between the cherubim, we praise thee as the high and the holy One that inhabitest eternity, and the praises of Zion, whose name is Holy. Thou art a God of spotless purity and holiness, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The heavens themselves are not clean in thy sight, and thine angels thou chargest with folly. How much more then man that is of the dust! How much more the sinful and perishing children of men! We rejoice to believe, O Lord our God, that, notwithstanding the sinfulness of our race, thou didst condescend to dwell with thine ancient people,—that thou didst take up thy residence in the temple which was erected for thy worship and glory,—and that thou didst say of Zion, This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. We bless thee that, while the temple is no more at Jerusalem, thou art erecting for thyself many spiritual temples. May all of us be living temples, in which thou wilt be pleased to dwell, and by which thy glory will be unfolded more and more in the sight of thy creatures through all eternity. Father of mercies, and God of all grace and consolation in Christ Jesus, we would make our grateful acknowledgments unto thee for the abundant provision which thou hast made for us in time and in eternity. Thou hast in store for us an inexhaustible treasury of the very richest blessings,—blessings great as our nature can sustain, and lasting as eternity itself. All these blessings we know thou art now offering to us without money and without price, if we will but come and ask thee. May we ask, then, that we may receive; may we seek, that we may find; may we knock at mercy's door, that it may be opened to us. While we ask the fulfilment of all thy great and precious promises for ourselves and for all who are near and dear unto us,

we would not be unmindful of the rest of our brethren of mankind. O may the dark places of the earth, which are still the habitations of horrid cruelty, soon be converted into happy lands, in which righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost shall universally prevail. May thy church be purified from its corruptions, and may it be extended till it shall fill the whole earth. We thank thee for permitting us to enjoy the light and the comforts of a new day. Keep thy good hand around us this day, to protect us from all the dangers and the temptations to which we may be exposed. May these our humble prayers ascend with acceptance before thy throne, through the merit of our exalted Redeemer, to whom with thee the Father and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed all praise and glory, both now and ever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XII. 23—50.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 23, 24. The vegetable world furnishes innumerable illustrations of the death of Christ, as a means of production; for every seed which is committed to the ground, by the decay of its external covering, supplies food to the germ, which produces the future plant that bears the fruit. Thus, a corn of wheat, which has not been sown, is unproductive; whereas, when it is deposited in the earth, it becomes fruitful: and, in like manner, had the Son of God not died, he could not have been the Saviour of sinners; while, by his death, he brings salvation to an innumerable multitude of the children of men, and thus manifests his glory in the view of his intelligent creatures. Ver. 25, 26. When a professing Christian is placed in such circumstances, that he is called, in the course of divine providence, to give up his life for the sake of Jesus Christ, if he refuses to do so, this will be an eternal loss to him, because he will perish for ever: and, on the contrary, when an individual yields up his life to the command of his Lord and Master, and, in the emphatical language of the holy scriptures, is said to hate it, he will enjoy everlasting glory and felicity in the divine presence. Ver. 28. God is glorified by all his works, but chiefly by the great work of redemption; for Jesus Christ, by his obedience unto death, has given such a satisfaction to the demands of divine justice, as never could have been given by the united sufferings of all created beings: and he has magnified the holy law of God, and made it honourable, by a righteousness which is unparalleled among the most exalted of the celestial intelligences. Ver. 42, 43. Though the Jewish nation witnessed the performance of many splendid and glorious miracles, they did not believe in Christ, which shows that a divine influence is ne-

cessary to turn sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

If we consider ourselves to be the servants of Jesus Christ, it is absolutely necessary that we follow him,—that we believe the pure and sublime doctrines which he has revealed to us, and that we endeavour, by the divine assistance, to practise the holy and excellent precepts which he has enjoined on us. Only those, who act in this manner, can have a well-grounded hope that they will be finally admitted into the heavenly world, and receive honour from him who is God over all and blessed for evermore. Living in a land which has been visited with the healing beams of 'the Sun of righteousness,' we should avail ourselves of the divine light which is afforded to us, that we may be safely guided to mansions of everlasting rest and felicity in the heavenly world. All of us who have made a profession of religion, should openly show our love and attachment to the Saviour, and bear a testimony for him before a 'world that lieth in wickedness.' True wisdom will lead us diligently to 'search the scriptures,' for they are to constitute the great standard by which our whole conduct is to be tried at the judgment seat of Christ.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we acknowledge thee to be our creator, our preserver, and our bountiful benefactor. Thou didst create us after thine own image, in knowledge, in righteousness, and in holiness; but we have fallen from a state of innocence and happiness into a state of sin and misery. Notwithstanding our unworthiness, thou hast continued to preserve us in existence, and thou art constantly supplying our manifold wants with the good things of this present life. But, above all, thou hast made most astonishing arrangements, whereby we may be saved from the tremendous consequences of sin, and raised to the enjoyment of inconceivably great and glorious blessings during the whole course of an endless life. When we reflect on the number and the magnitude of the blessings which thou art conferring on us, we are lost in astonishment, for we are conscious that we are not worthy of the least of all thy mercies. Bless the Lord, O our souls: and all that is within us, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all our iniquities; who healeth all our diseases; who redeemeth our lives from destruction; who crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercies. We bless thee, O God, that when there was no eye to pity us, and no hand to help us among created beings, thine own eye pitied us and thine own arm brought us salvation. Thou didst lay our help on one mighty to save, even on thine only-begotten Son, who is equal to thyself in

power and in glory. And we rejoice to believe, that he did not hesitate to descend from his throne of glory in the heavens, and to veil the uncreated excellencies of his Godhead with the robe of our humanity, that he might be in circumstances to suffer and die in our room and stead. O may we be enabled to confide in him as all our salvation, and all our desire, that we may be permitted, in due time, to join the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven. May we be enabled to believe in him as the light of the world, that we may be conducted by him to the regions of everlasting light and felicity. Thou hast been pleased, O God, to bring us to the termination of another day. We thank thee, for all the goodness, and mercy, and grace, which thou art continually making to pass before us. Thou art causing the outgoings of the evening and the morning to rejoice over us. Thou art daily loading us with thy benefits. We commend ourselves to thy fatherly protection during the night, and when we awake in the morning, may we be reminded of the morning of the resurrection, when we shall rise to be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the view of assembled worlds. O God of our salvation, grant that the time may soon come, when the glad tidings of eternal life shall be published in every language, and in every land: when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea; and when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and when he shall reign for ever and ever. Hear, O God, in heaven, these our humble prayers, and send us an answer in peace, for our divine Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 5.

SCRIPTURE—1 KINGS VIII.

REMARKS.

The sacred service of placing the ark in its fixed residence being completed, and Jehovah having visibly manifested his favour to the joy and gratitude of his servant, Solomon now stood before the altar, expecting success to his petitions in virtue of that great sacrifice, which, in the fulness of time, was to be offered up, and which was typified by the sacrifices presented at that altar, and poured out his soul in the presence of his assembled people, in that prayer, which for fervency, sublimity, and pathos, has been the admiration of the devout in every succeeding generation,—supplicating that God would in all ages, and in all cases, hear the prayers of Israel, and of strangers, when they called upon him, towards this his

holy temple. Having again blessed Israel, exhorting them to obedience, and praised Jehovah for his mercy and faithfulness, Solomon offers a splendid sacrifice of peace-offerings, keeps the feast fourteen days, and then dismisses the people, who bless the king, filled with admiration at his wisdom and piety, and go into their tents, joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people.

1st, Amidst all the glories of Solomon's reign, never did he appear more truly glorious than when thus having respect unto the ark of God, and lifting up his soul to Jehovah in humble and fervent prayer before his assembled people. 2d, From the holy zeal that was displayed at this time by all Israel gathered together by the decree of Solomon, let us learn how much good the influence of those in authority or in exalted stations may do when that influence is enlisted on the side of piety. 3d, As the ark of the covenant, the symbol of God's gracious presence, was the glory of Israel of old, so the favour of God resting upon any land, is its highest blessedness and sacred defence in all generations. 4th, The temple of Solomon in the symmetry of its proportions, the beauty of its architecture, and the costliness of its materials, was, among other things that it shadowed forth, an eminent type of the church in New Testament times. The ark, again, containing the tables of the law, and covered with the mercy-seat, was a no less illustrious type of Christ, who had his Father's law in his heart; that law which he magnified and made honourable; who is also the true mercy-seat, in whom only God is propitious, and who now dwells, not by any visible symbol, but by the gifts of his grace and the influence of his Spirit, in the church at large, and in every individual believer in particular. As the temple of Solomon, therefore, without the ark, was but as a body without a soul, a house without an inhabitant, so the visible church, without the gracious presence of Christ, or the gracious presence of God in him, and the communication of spiritual gifts and graces out of his fulness, is nothing more than a well-proportioned lifeless carcase. 5th, Did Solomon adore the condescension of Jehovah, in dwelling typically with his people of old? Let us rejoice that in Christ Jesus, God in very deed did dwell on the earth, and now that our true ark hath entered into the holy place not made with hands, and hath said of New Testament Zion, his spiritual temple, 'This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it;' let us look to the mercy-seat that has thus been established as all our confidence towards God, and let us cherish communion with him, as a reconciled Father, through the person and work of the Redeemer, and by the influences of his sanctifying and comforting Spirit. This is the life and soul of true godliness, infusing efficacy into every truth, and imparting the blessing to every ordinance.

PRAYER.

O God, the supreme, independent, and ever blessed Jehovah, we would this morning lift up our souls unto thee, filled with wonder and grateful adoration at the riches of thy grace and conde-

scension towards us, the creatures of thy power, the objects of thy bounty, the sinful and undeserving monuments of thy long-sparing goodness.

We bless thee that thou who didst manifest thy gracious presence in the midst of thy people of old, by types and shadows, hast, in these last days, dwelt with man upon the earth, through him who, being the brightness of thy glory, and the express image of thy person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, hath by himself purged our sins, and sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high; and now that Jesus our true ark and mercy-seat hath entered into the holy place not made with hands, we would look by faith unto him as all our hope and confidence before thee. For his sake, O do thou who dwellest between the cherubim shine forth; have mercy upon us, according to thy loving kindness, and according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out our transgressions; send down upon us thy Holy Spirit, in all his enlightening, and sanctifying, and comforting influences; shed abroad thy love in our hearts, and give to us an interest in all the blessings of that everlasting, and well-ordered, and sure covenant, which the blood of Christ has ratified. O grant unto us that we may be members in truth of Christ's mystical body, even of that church which is built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord, and in whom all thy people are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. And we pray thee, that thou wouldst graciously accept and answer the supplications of thy people throughout the whole earth, ministering to all their necessities, hearing them in the day of their trouble, sending them help from the sanctuary, and strengthening them out of Zion. Do thou raise up, also, human instruments, zealously disposed to seek the good of thy house, and especially may kings be nursing fathers and their queens nursing mothers to the church, that through the influence of their authority and example, accompanied with thine own blessing, all the people and the kingdoms of the earth may be gathered together to serve the Lord. Look down thyself favourably upon thine heritage, granting times of refreshing from thy presence, and let the time, even the set time, to favour Zion, speedily arrive. We thank thee for thy preserving goodness through the past night, and implore thy protection and guidance throughout this day. May we be assisted in duty, may we be shielded in the midst of temptation, may we

be encompassed with thy favour, and may we be kept in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CIII. 8.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1. The objects of Christ's love are styled 'his own,' as those who had been given him from eternity by the Father, those whom he had called by his Spirit, and those who were now about to be bought by his precious blood. Ver. 2—5. The clause 'supper being ended,' may be rendered 'supper being come.' Satan's first instigation of Judas to betray his Lord, here referred to, and his agreement with the chief priests, having taken place shortly before the passover supper (Mat. xxvi. 14—16; Luke xxii. 3—6), and the subsequent washing of the disciples' feet, not after supper, but, as is generally supposed, just at the time when the feast of unleavened bread began, and before the paschal lamb was eaten. Whilst the transaction of washing the disciples' feet was intended, according to our Lord's own example, and after-explanation, to teach brotherly love and humility among Christians, it was emblematical, also, of that washing from sin by the atoning blood and sanctifying Spirit of Christ: and when it is said by the Saviour, 'He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit,' he intends that the believer, in the first act of receiving him, has all his sins forgiven, and the principle of sanctification infused into all the faculties and dispositions of his soul, and needeth not again to be brought into a justified and sanctified state, but is graciously considered as already cleansed, and requireth only, by reason of remaining infirmities and temptations, and his consequent liability to contract new guilt and defilement in his daily walk, to have fresh recourse to a throne of grace, through the blood of sprinkling. Ver. 18—30. The Saviour had said (ver. 10), with obvious reference to Judas, 'ye are clean, but not all;' and here he tells the disciples that he was fully aware of those amongst them whom he had chosen to faith, holiness, and salvation; and referring to the language of prophecy, 'he that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me,' (Psal. xli. 9.), he manifests his omniscience, by not only revealing that one of them should betray him, but expressly pointing out the traitor to his beloved disciple John, solicited by Peter to ask, 'who it should be of whom he spake.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How tender and abiding the love, and how amazing the condescension of Christ towards them who

are 'his own.' Though in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, 'for their sakes he took upon him the form of a servant,'—and he who in the days of his flesh, and in the immediate prospect of returning to his Father, and sitting on his throne of glory, washed his disciples' feet, is still ready to perform, towards the meanest of his people, every office of kindness which their spiritual circumstances require. We, however, can have no vital union with him, so as to be regarded as his, unless we are washed by his blood from the guilt, and by his Spirit from the power of sin; and unless walking in humility of heart and brotherly love before him, we imitate his example and comply with his gracious commands. Blessed is the thought, that if once we have been washed through him, we can never again come into condemnation, but 'are clean every whit,' and need only those supplies of mercy and grace which our daily short-comings, and temptations, and difficulties require, and which he out of his fulness is ever ready to dispense. Let us be sensible of our necessity, and daily repair to 'the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness,' that our spiritual peace may be preserved, and our progress in holiness secured.

Let us beware of assuming the mere outward mask of discipleship, for that same Jesus who discovered all the wickedness that was in the heart of Judas, ever trieth the hearts and reins, and whilst he knoweth our most secret dispositions, he is grieved at the dishonour of being wounded in the house of his professed friends, and shall assuredly assign to hypocrites their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. More especially is hypocrisy detestable when found amongst those who sustain high offices in his church, and deep is the guilt of all who, in any situation, betray the cause of the Redeemer for filthy lucre's sake.

How different would be the aspect of the visible church, were the professed people of Christ more mindful of the new commandment which he gave to his disciples, 'endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,' and loving one another with a pure heart fervently. Let us seek, then, to remember the gracious words of our now glorified Redeemer, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.'

Did our Saviour, amidst the self-confidence of Peter, foretell his melancholy fall? Let us then not be high-minded, but fear, and with a godly jealousy over ourselves, let us patiently wait for the salvation of our God, cherishing the hope of afterwards following our risen Lord to that blessed abode whither he hath gone before us.

PRAYER.

Most merciful and ever-blessed God, w^e would draw near unto thee this evening with the spirit of grace and supplication richly poured out upon us, and having our fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ may we experience the blessedness of the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee. O do thou give unto us increas

ingly to see our need of that precious Saviour whom thou hast provided, and may we be found in him, washed in his blood, justified through his righteousness, and sanctified through his Spirit. We confess that we are daily sinning against thee, and that we have therefore daily need of recourse to that blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Do thou pardon whatsoever thou hast seen amiss in us this day, whether in thought, in word, or in deed, and do thou sanctify us wholly, in spirit, in soul, and in body, that we may henceforth depart from iniquity in one and all of its forms, that we may hate it as that abominable thing which the Lord our God hateth, and that we may walk in all the commandments and in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless. Do thou bless unto us that portion of thy word which we have now been reading, and enable us to have the witness within ourselves that we are the objects of that everlasting love which Jesus bears to his own people. May the same mind be in us which was also in him, and in lowliness of mind, esteeming each other as better than ourselves, may we walk in love even as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. May the sacred principle of love unite us with a pure heart fervently to the whole household of faith; may no office of kindness to thy people appear too low for us, and to do good, and to communicate, may we forget not, seeing that with such sacrifices the Lord is well pleased. And we pray, O heavenly Father, that thou wouldst heal the divisions of thy church, and whilst thy people earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints, may they endeavour also to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Forbid, O Lord, that we should either deny the Lord who bought us, or betray his cause; and do thou preserve us from all self-confidence, that relying upon that grace by which alone we can stand, and animated with the hope of living and reigning with Christ hereafter, we may be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. We acknowledge with grateful hearts thy bounty and loving-kindness vouchsafed to us this day, and we commit ourselves and all who are dear to us to thy care and keeping throughout the silence of the night. Hear us and accept of us, for all that we ask is for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 11.

SCRIPTURE—1 KINGS IX.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—9. A favourable answer to Solomon's prayer, at the dedication of the temple, had already been visibly signified to him, by fire coming down from heaven and consuming the sacrifices on the altar before which he stood, (2 Chron. vii. 1.) and in addition to this very customary token of the divine acceptance, in Old Testament times, we here find Jehovah, after all the solemnities of the dedication were over, condescending to appear to his servant in vision, as he had previously done at Gibeon, in the beginning of his reign, and for his more abundant comfort, giving him an answer more express and distinct. He assures him that having heard his prayer and supplication, he had 'hallowed,' or consecrated, 'the house he had built, to put his name there for ever,' that is, he had set it apart as holy, for the residence of his ark, the centre of his worship, and the visible pledge of his gracious presence with Israel. In token, too, of the peculiar favour with which he would regard the temple, and the holy complacency he would have in its worshippers, he adds, 'and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.' In all this, how gracious and condescending appears the Lord our God! How much must the heart of Solomon have been gladdened and refreshed, and how well might he say, with his father David, (Psal. lvi. 19, 20.) 'Verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.' The same covenant-keeping God in Christ Jesus, is the hearer of the prayers of his people in all generations. Let us adore and magnify him as such, and pour out our hearts in believing supplication before him; and though we cannot now expect supernatural visions to testify directly that our prayers are accepted, yet the Lord shall assuredly, in his own time and way, manifest himself graciously unto us, and cause us experimentally to know that 'he hath not said unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain.'

The answer of Jehovah to Solomon, however, whilst it was encouraging, was also monitory. He assured him, indeed, that he had been graciously accepted, but reminded him also that the continuance of the divine favour towards him and his posterity, and the stability of his kingdom, depended on their own steadfastness in the covenant, and specially 'in walking before the Lord, as David his father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness.' The same condition had been laid down to David himself, (Psal. cxxxii. 11, 12.) and indeed pervades, from the beginning, all God's covenant dealings with his people. The denunciations contained in ver. 6—9. have obviously a particular reference to national idolatry, sanctioned by the example and encouraged by the influence and authority of the prince; and whilst they were fulfilled in part during the Babylonish captivity, they have met with their highest accomplishment in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the state of the

Jewish nation to the present day. Let us not imagine, from what is thus recorded in regard to Solomon, his posterity, and his kingdom, that the continuance of God's favour to his people depends on the merit of their own after obedience. The covenant is, in its origin and in all its provisions, a covenant of sovereign and free grace. Let us learn, however, that under grace the obligations of God's holy law are not made void, that Jehovah may visit the transgressions of his own people with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes, and specially, that no favour or spiritual advantages, vouchsafed to any family or kingdom, can be a security for their continued enjoyment, where there is a departure, on the part of posterity, from the faith in which their fathers walked, or a national casting off of the true religion or the outward means by which, through the blessing of God, it might be perpetuated. 'Cabul' signifies displeasing, and Hiram's being accustomed to commerce, and the wealth and magnificence of a mercantile community, seems to have been the cause of his dissatisfaction with the cities which Solomon gave him, and his reason for giving them the above name. They were probably small and ruinous, and placed in an obscure and thinly peopled part of the country. He afterwards returned them to Solomon, who rebuilt them, (2 Chron. viii. 2.) and no doubt Solomon, in taking them back, gave an equivalent with which Hiram was satisfied. It is good when rulers take counsel together, and give their wealth and influence not against but for the Lord; and it is our duty, according to our ability, to equal or exceed the kindness we experience from others in the prosecution of any enterprise in which we engage.

PRAYER.

O Lord, on this, the morning of another day, we desire with humble boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, in the new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil of his flesh. May we draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed as with pure water. We would contemplate thee in the united glory of thy character as a just God and also a Saviour, and conscious of our own unworthiness in thy presence, would bless thee for all the confidence which, through the Son of thy love, we are permitted to cherish towards thee as the hearer of prayer, the God in whom compassions flow, and the covenant God and Father of all who believe. Look not on us as we are in ourselves, guilty, and polluted, and exposed to thy righteous displeasure, but behold, O God, our Shield, and look on the face of thine Anointed. For his sake take away all our iniquity and receive us graciously; heal our backslidings and love us freely; remember us with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people; O visit us with thy salvation, that we may see the good of thy

chosen, that we may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that we may glory with thine inheritance. May we taste and see that the Lord is gracious; and in the experience of thy mercy, may we increasingly feel the obligations under which we are placed to live devoted to thy service. Forbid that at any time we should sin that grace may abound, and presumptuously expect the gladdening influence of the light of thy countenance lifted up upon us, whilst we forsake thy law, and walk not in thy ways; and may thy Holy Spirit so work in us, both to will and to do of thy good pleasure, that in integrity of heart and in uprightness, we may do according to all that thou hast commanded us, keeping thy statutes and thy judgments continually. We pray, O Lord, that thy church may everywhere be built up. May the number of them who love and fear thy blessed name be increased, and through their exertions and prayers may the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom be speedily established throughout the whole earth. We thank thee for the mercies of the past night, and entreat that thy gracious presence may be with us throughout this day. May we and all who are dear to us experience thy Fatherly care, and enjoy not only the gifts of thy providence, but the saving blessings of thy grace. Come over the mountains of our provocations, and send an answer in peace to the voice of our supplication, for all that we ask is for the sake of Jesus Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLIII.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XIV.

REMARKS.

This beautiful chapter is a continuation of our Saviour's discourse to his disciples after Judas had gone out from the midst of them, for the accomplishment of his traitorous design, as recorded towards the conclusion of the chapter preceding.

Ver. 1. The Saviour perceiving the sorrow that had filled the disciples, on account of what he had been saying, specially in reference to his own speedy departure, exhorts them not to allow so much trouble to possess and discompose their hearts; and the foundation of comfort to which he directs them, is faith in God the Father, and in himself as the promised Messiah. This is the sure and abiding ground of consolation to the people of God, amidst all the trials of their earthly pilgrimage, for why, under any tribulation, should they be overwhelmed who believe in God as the sovereign ruler and infinitely wise disposer of all events, and in Jesus Christ, through whom, as the propitiation for their

sins, they are restored to the divine favour, and ever live under a special providence for good? Rom. viii. 28.

Ver. 2, 3. The disciples were still to a certain extent under the influence of carnal views regarding Christ's kingdom, and our Lord, knowing that their grief arose in part from their expectations of worldly preferment and honour being frustrated, here elevates their hopes to glorious mansions in his Father's house above, which he was gone to prepare for them; and assures them, that he would come again and receive them to himself, that they might be with him for ever. In the divine purpose, these mansions had been prepared 'from the foundation of the world,' (Matt. xxv. 34.) yet it behoved the Saviour now to offer himself a sacrifice for their sins, and then to enter into heaven as their forerunner and representative, that by his atoning blood he might procure for them a right of admission, and himself take possession of these mansions in their name.

Ver. 4—12. How interesting the declarations made by our Lord in these verses, in condescension to the remaining spiritual blindness and unbelief of Thomas and Philip. Jesus is 'the way, and the truth, and the life.' He is 'the way,' to pardon, to holiness, to God, and to heaven. He is 'the truth,' in distinction from legal types and shadows, and as himself 'the faithful witness' in character, doctrine, and precept. And he is 'the life' as himself the living one, and the author of spiritual and eternal life to all who believe; neither can any man 'come unto the Father but by him.' We must be quickened by him as our life, guided by him as the truth, and come by him as the way. How great too is the dignity of this same Jesus, upon whom we have to depend! Such was the essential union and mutual indwelling between him and the Father, and so truly did all the fulness of the Godhead dwell in his human nature, that he could say to Philip, 'he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' Could any mere creature have made such a declaration?

Ver. 13, 14. The blessed assurance here given, that Christ will do what is asked in his name, is not to be confined to the apostles, and the gifts vouchsafed to them, for the success of the gospel through their ministry. It is recorded for the comfort of his people in all ages, in so far as what they ask, shall be subservient to their own good, consistent with his will, and conducive to his glory. Mark the omnipotence of Christ, 'I will do it.' The blessings that come to us through believing prayer, not only flow through his merits, but are bestowed by his own power and authority.

Ver. 15—24. The keeping of Christ's commandments is an indispensable requisite as an evidence of our love to him, and let us rejoice that though he is no longer upon earth, yet through his intercession, the Father hath sent another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, who now dwelleth in every believer.

Ver. 25—31. Jesus had spoken these things to his disciples concerning himself and the promised Comforter, 'being yet with them,' and when now about to leave them, he tells them that this blessed Comforter would teach them all things needful for them to know, and bring his discourse fully to their

remembrance. He bequeaths to them also 'his peace.' It is his peace, as he is at once the purchaser and the bestower of it. The disciples could not rejoice at their Lord's departure considered in itself, but should have rejoiced because he went unto the Father, this being the token of the Father's acceptance of his work—the triumphant assertion of his own rights as Mediator—the earnest of the outpouring of the Spirit, and the pledge of their own future exaltation. 'My Father is greater than I.' This language is every way compatible with the Saviour's essential divinity, being not spoken with reference to it, but to his human nature, and his mediatorial character, in which he acted as the Father's servant, Isa. xlii. 1.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art over all, and art rich in mercy unto all that call upon thee. Do thou enable us this evening to offer unto thee the sacrifices of righteousness, and to put our trust under the shadow of thy wings. We adore thee as the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and in him the God of salvation, to all who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel. We thank thee for all that Jesus did, and taught, and suffered; for the holy example which he set before us, for the doctrine of eternal life which proceeded out of his mouth, and for that perfect obedience which he rendered unto thee, even unto the death of the cross, whereby he finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. We especially bless thee at this time for those gracious words of comfort which he spake in the immediate prospect of the hour and power of darkness, and which we have just been reading from thy holy word. Do thou work in our souls a principle of living faith in him, that amidst all the sorrows of this mortal life we may be enabled to place our confidence in thee as a reconciled Father, and in Jesus as the rock of our salvation. Do thou elevate our thoughts and affections to those many mansions in his Father's house, which our exalted Saviour has gone to prepare for his believing people, and walking as strangers and pilgrims upon earth, leaning upon Jesus as the beloved of our souls, may he at length receive us to himself, that where he is there we may be also. May we ever look to him, and trust in him, as the way, and the truth, and the life, through whom only there is access to the Father; and quickened by his Spirit, guided by his word, and confiding on his righteousness, may we be accepted in thy sight, and rejoice in him as all our salvation and all our desire. We thank thee, that whilst Jesus has ascended up on high, thou hast sent through

him the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to abide with thy church and people for ever. May we, through this blessed Spirit of all grace, have true fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ, and the God of hope fill us with all peace and joy in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. We rejoice in the mediatorial honour with which the Saviour is now invested at the Father's right hand, and would look to his exaltation as the pledge of future glory and blessedness to all his people. May he preserve us by his mighty power, through faith, unto salvation. We thank thee for thy protecting care throughout the past day, and now commit our bodies and spirits to thy keeping during the silence of the night. Ever watch over us and ours, and graciously forgive our sins, and hear our prayers, for all that we ask is for Christ's sake, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXVII. 22.

SCRIPTURE—1 KINGS X.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In eastern countries it has been customary, in all ages, to put enigmatical, or puzzling questions to those who had the reputation of being learned, in order to prove, not only the extent of their knowledge, but their sagacity in unravelling that which is perplexing. With such 'hard questions' the queen of Sheba came from the land of the south, to try the king of Israel; and after communing with him of all that was in her heart, and getting a solution of all her difficulties, was filled with amazement at his wisdom. She then speaks in glowing terms of the happiness of those who had such a master and king to regulate their affairs, and with a devotional spirit, which it would have been well for Solomon to have imitated, ascribes the honour and the praise to Jehovah alone.

The remaining part of the chapter contains an account of Solomon's riches and revenue. His father's victories having extended his dominion from sea to sea, his own wisdom enabled him to take advantage of the favourable position that he occupied, and to make Judea the great emporium of trade. His navy, that sailed in company with the Syrians, brought to him the produce of Europe and the west; the ships that sailed from Ezion-geber, a city that he built on the shores of the Red sea, imported the riches of the south and east; so that the commerce, which in ancient times enriched the Syrians and Alexandrians, and more recently has swelled the store of the Venetians and British, centred in Judea, and made it the market-place of the world. In consequence of

this extensive traffic, we are told, that the gold received year by year, as the profit of his merchandise alone, amounted to six hundred and sixty-six talents, a sum equal to about four millions of our money. We are farther informed, that every kind of precious stone and spicery, every variety of beautiful wood, the finest horses and mules, and the most valuable products of the Egyptian loom, were found with him in the greatest abundance.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

In the conduct of the queen of Sheba, we find much that deserves to be imitated and admired. The desire for knowledge, and the determination to see and judge for herself, that brought her to hear the wisdom of Solomon, are in themselves commendable; but appear much more so, when we are led, by the expressions in the eighth verse, to conclude that she sought this knowledge in order that she might be the better able to promote the happiness of those over whom the Lord had appointed her queen. Her humility, evinced by the praise she so readily and freely bestowed upon Solomon, and more especially the devotional spirit which led her to magnify the Lord, as the original author of his wisdom and power, should be carefully imitated by every believer.

In the king of Israel we see a rare example of highly cultivated talent, and consummate political skill. Many maxims of national economy, and principles of trade, that have been vaunted of as the discoveries of modern times, seem to have been known and acted upon by him; and unparalleled success attended his schemes. He asked for an understanding heart to govern the people, and the Lord granted his request to the full. But while we are told of his praying for skill to govern his subjects, we do not read of him asking for grace, to subdue the corrupt desires that war against the soul, and we find that his wisdom was stained with the most egregious folly, for he forsook the living God, and bowed his knee to the idols of the heathen. The Lord gave unto him all that the heart of man naturally desires, to show us how easily he could make his people learned, rich, and famous. He left him to write with respect to it, 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity,' to show us the nothingness of earthly things. And he allowed him to become the dupe of his female slaves, to show that the highest talent, and greatest learning, are but weakness and folly, when restraining grace is withheld.

PRAYER.

We approach unto thee, O Lord, as the self-existent and eternal source of life, for by thee have all things been created. We adore thee as the great preserver of the universe, for in thee all creatures live, and move, and have their being. Thou art infinite in wisdom and in power, rich in mercy, and unbounded in love, and all thy works show forth the glorious perfections of the living God. We desire especially to bless and magnify thy name, because of thy goodness manifested towards us the children of men. Though we are utterly unworthy of th

regard, thou hast never ceased to care for us; though we have provoked thy wrath and fiery indignation, by our manifold transgressions, thou hast sent thine only-begotten Son to die in our stead, and, by enduring the inconceivable agony of the cross, to make a propitiation for our offences. Make us to feel deeply our obligations unto thee, enable us to perceive our need of a Saviour, and in thine abundant love, grant unto us faith to rest on him, as all our hope and our desire. We thank thee, that thou hast given unto us minds capable of understanding the wisdom and goodness shown forth in thy works. O may thy Spirit descend upon us, and direct our thoughts to the understanding of thy perfections as manifested in the great work of our redemption. Teach us to know thee, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent; and grant thy blessing, that a deep sense of the mercy shown us may constrain us to depart from all iniquity. Preserve us from the pursuit of sin and folly, and make us ever to remember that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and that the knowledge of thy holy word is the only means by which we can be guided unto life everlasting. Forbid, O Lord, that the queen of the south should rise up in the judgment against us, because she sought to hear the wisdom of Solomon, while we neglect the counsels of thine own Son from heaven. Teach us to prize our privileges, and enable us to profit by them. Wean our souls from the love of earthly things, and enable us to fix them upon things eternal. Give us an interest in Christ, that, filled with the hope of a glorious immortality, we may look on all the pleasures of time as fleeting and uncertain, and, rising above the snares and temptations of the world, may have our treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thief breaks through to steal. Whether thou sendest prosperity or adversity, keep us from forsaking thee, for thou art the only sure and abiding portion. Thou only canst comfort in life, support at death, and bless through eternity. Pardon the sins of the days that are past, and give us grace for the time to come, that in the hour of temptation we may stand unmoved, and in the season of duty, may neither faint nor be weary in well-doing. Hear our prayers, O Lord, and grant an answer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXX. 17.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In the first part of the chapter, our Lord compares himself to a vine, and his disciples to the branches; and, by this simple and pleasing similitude, shows the advantages that result from a close and abiding union with him. As the branch must derive its sap and nourishment from the root, so we must draw spiritual nourishment and growth in grace from the Redeemer alone. As the branch, though full of leaf, and rich in blossom, will wither and decay, when severed from the stem, so the Christian, however great his attainments, and however rich his experience, will immediately fall into folly and sin, if the all-sustaining power of the Holy Spirit be withdrawn. He that abideth not in Christ, like a dead and withered branch cast into the fire, will be consumed in the furnace of divine vengeance; while he that continueth in him, like a fruitful bough, will bring forth abundantly the works of righteousness, and be the honoured instrument of promoting the glory of the Father. Having thus briefly described the blessedness of those that continue in him, our Lord points out its origin and source. 'As the Father,' saith he, 'hath loved me, so have I loved you.' Jesus regards his disciples with that love which is peculiar to the deity. The affections of every created being are necessarily limited in their extent. In God alone do we find goodness without measure or bound, carrying its sympathies to the farthest verge of the universe, and continuing its energies from everlasting to everlasting. In the creature, moreover, every feeling is more or less mingled with selfish emotion; in the Creator, benevolence is absolutely pure. The tenderness of man to man, nay, even of seraph to seraph, has in it some mixture of selfishness. We do good to others, not only because it benefits them, but because the conferring of pleasure increases our own enjoyment. But the great Jehovah is unwearied in his acts of love, though he be infinitely blessed in himself, and though his joy cannot be increased, either by receiving the services, or by witnessing the happiness of his creatures. When our Lord therefore says, 'as the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you,' he, in other words, declares that his affection for his people is eternal and unbounded, and that his grace is sovereign and pure. While thus assuring them of his regard, he urges upon them the duty of loving one another, as he loved them. He calls this his 'commandment;' he sets forth its performance by his people, as the great object which he had in view, and whether he speaks of the fulness of his affection, or of the sacrifice that it led him to offer, he concludes with the counsel, 'love one another.' This precept, so strongly enforced, is in every way worthy of its author. To love as Jesus loved, implies the exercise of affection free from selfish alloy, unwearied in its efforts, and unbounded in its object. We are, in short, enjoined to 'have the same mind in us, that was in Christ,'

'to be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect,' and through his grace, to seek to 'be partakers of the divine nature,' of which the essence is described when it is said, that 'God is love.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Who can read this chapter without admiring the wisdom and the grace of Jesus? How simple and beautiful is the compassion with which it begins, and how naturally does our Saviour's counsel flow from it! And, again, how rich are the promises that he makes, and how admirably are they brought to bear upon the precept that he gives! But it is not merely the style and manner that draw our attention, we are especially called upon to mark the character in which the Saviour appears, and to which his language corresponds. He here addresses his disciples as the great Immanuel, who combined in his person the nature of God with that of man. He speaks with authority, as the Lord of glory, and bids them ask what they will, and assures them that their request will be given. He refers to his sufferings, as the man of sorrows, and foretells his cruel and shameful death. His promises and his threatenings bespeak a consciousness of sovereign power, yet his counsels are mild and gentle as those of a brother. We recognise the voice of him who bade the earth appear, and who will hereafter command the dead to arise, though it be whispering peace, and in the most soothing accents breathing comfort. He retains, as it were, all the loveliness of the Godhead, but has veiled its dazzling splendour. He has laid aside his terrors, lest they should make us afraid; he exhibits his mercy, that we may with boldness approach, and put our confidence in him. If this be indeed the case, let the trembling penitent rejoice; he who for our sakes became poor, he who left the throne of heaven, to die on a cross for men, will not reject the returning prodigal, nor despise the prayer of the broken in heart.

PRAYER.

Gracious God, and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, we desire to thank and praise thee for thine unspeakable love in sending thy Son to make our peace with thee. Make us ever to keep in mind, that without him we are dead in trespasses and sins, that by nature we are children of wrath and heirs of damnation. Cause us to feel deeply our own unworthiness, and to mourn after a godly sort on account of our transgressions. Set our sins in array before us, that seeing their number and manifold aggravations, we may be led to hate them and turn from them. Teach us the extent of our guilt and vileness in thy sight, that we may know the need we have of a Redeemer, and that we may, in some measure, be enabled to comprehend the length, and breadth, and height, and depth, of thy love to us in Christ; though fully to know it passeth all understanding. Send thy Spirit into our hearts, that we may be filled with love and gratitude to thee, and enable us to show forth the sincerity

of our devotion, by loving our neighbour as thou hast commanded. Unite us to Christ and make us partakers of the spiritual nourishment that flows from him, that though dead and barren by nature, we may bring forth abundantly the fruits of righteousness to the honour and glory of thee, the Father. Pardon, we pray thee, the sins we have done. Our iniquities are more than the hairs of our head, and fearfully great have their aggravations been. We have sinned against thee, the great Creator, by whom we at first were formed; we have been unmindful of all thy mercies, though thou hast continually preserved us; yea, we have often followed the paths of folly and of sin, though the glad tidings of the gospel have sounded in our ears. Blessed be thy name, thou art merciful and gracious, long-suffering and slow to wrath, and in thee there is redemption even for the chief of sinners. For Jesus' sake blot out our iniquities, and let them not rise up in judgment against us. Give us this night a peaceful slumber, and grant that we may arise in the morning, refreshed, and strengthened, and fitted for the duties of a sabbath-day. Be with thy ministering servants, whom thou hast appointed to distribute unto thy people the bread of life. Guide their thoughts to such subjects as may prove most beneficial to the people under their care, and grant that teachers and taught may be all taught of thee. Hear our prayers, and accept of our thanksgivings, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our great Redeemer, to whom, with thee the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXIX. 32.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXIX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The specific causes that led to the composition of this psalm are not known, but it is obvious, from the whole tenor of it, that they were of an afflictive kind. Ver. 1—21. In these verses the psalmist gives vent to his feelings, in descriptions of his troubles and in earnest prayers for deliverance. Two things especially seem to press heavily on his heart. 1. His own sinfulness, ver. 5; and, 2. The bitter persecutions of the ungodly, ver. 4., &c. For deliverance from both, he betakes himself to God in many earnest supplications. And herein appeared the psalmist's clear views of God's covenant mercy, and his steadfast trust in it, for whereas, generally, sinners are inclined to recoil from the presence and throne of God when they are visited with convic-

tions of sin or providential adversities, he hastes to God's mercy and love as his support and consolation under them. Ver. 22—28. These verses may be viewed in a two-fold light, 1. As divinely inspired imprecations of the psalmist against his wicked persecutors. For the psalm being written by the inspiration of the Spirit, these imprecatory prayers may be viewed as divine threatenings against impenitent sinners, similar to that one, 'Curse ye Meroz,' &c. Or, 2. They may be rendered as simple predictions of divine judgments against them; for the imperative mood, in the Hebrew, admits of a translation in the future tense. Ver. 29—36. These concluding verses express the psalmist's joy in God, and his confidence of eventual triumph over all his enemies. This joy enlarges his heart, and he invokes universal nature to join him in his song of praise.

But although this psalm is primarily applicable to David, yet there is evidence that its principal application is to Christ and his Jewish enemies. Thus ver. 4, 9, 21. are applied to Christ in John xv. 25; i. 17; xix. 29, 30; and ver. 22, 23. are applied by Paul, in Rom. xi. 8—10. to the Jews who were guilty of his crucifixion, and who were consequently abandoned by God to final unbelief and impenitence. With these keys to its chief signification, we remark that the psalm delineates the humiliation and sufferings of Christ; his eventual deliverance and triumphs, and the judgments (ver. 22—29) which overwhelmed his Jewish persecutors and murderers.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Whether we view the subject and sufferer of this psalm as David or Christ, there are some lessons which it is well fitted to teach us. 1. If we be followers of Christ, we must expect reproach and persecution for his sake. If worldly men can allege our personal infirmities or inconsistencies as the ground of their reproach, they will do it; but, when they cannot, they will not hesitate to avow the real ground of their hatred of us, viz. our faith in Christ and our holy conversation. 2. Ridicule and afflictions for the sake of Christ, should not weaken our attachment to him, but should rather increase it. The more David was afflicted, the more he trusted in God and cried to him in prayer. The more also that Christ, David's antitype, was persecuted, the more strikingly did his faith in his heavenly Father's love display its steadfastness. The faith of God's people needs to be proved and perfected, and for this purpose he sometimes tries it with sore adversities, and permits it to be assailed by temptations and persecutions. And, 3. in all their afflictions and persecutions, believers should constantly cherish the confidence of an ultimate triumph over them. See how David, or rather Christ, exults in the conclusion of this psalm. Paul and Silas also praised God when they were in the dungeons of a prison. For, if it should please God not to grant us any deliverance from our afflictions on earth, death at all events will terminate them, and the everlasting joys and triumphs of heaven will succeed; in the sure prospect of which every suffering believer may exclaim, 'I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgivings,' &c.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Jehovah, as the God of salvation. Thou hast been the dwelling-place of thy people in all generations. We approach thy throne of grace with feelings of reverence and humility, for thou art glorious in holiness, but we are full of darkness and sin. Let not our iniquities cause thee to hide thy face, or to turn away our prayer from thee; but as thou hast revealed thyself in Christ as a sin-forgiving God, so do thou, for his sake, blot out our iniquities, and shine upon us with the light of thy fatherly countenance. O Lord, renew and sanctify us as well as forgive our sins. As our hearts are by nature dead unto thee and alive unto sin, void of all good and of all power to good, but full of all unrighteous lusts and passions, so we cannot glorify thee, nor ever enjoy happiness if thou dost not change our hearts, and enrich us with the divine and holy affections of thy Spirit. Lord, out of thy abundant grace in Christ, give us full measure of enlightening, renewing, and sanctifying grace. And may thy grace and Spirit in us be ever active and influential, so that we may not only be saved ourselves, but may also be instruments of thy glory in the world. Give us, O Lord, fortitude to confess Christ, and even, if need be, to suffer for him in the world. May the zeal of thine house so eat us up that we will be ever willing to extend its glory, although we should suffer reproach and persecution for thy sake. O forbid that inconstancy or apostacy should at any time distinguish our profession of religion before men. Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for our sakes; let not those that seek thee be confounded for our sakes, O God of Israel. Gracious God, do thou support and console us in all our trials and temptations; draw nigh unto our souls and redeem them; deliver us because of our enemies. Grant that by thy grace we may truly believe in Christ, and be maintained in our faith till thou call us hence, in spite of all adversities and spiritual enemies. And now, O Lord, we give thee thanks for all thy past loving-kindness to us, and especially for our religious privileges, and for permitting us to see the light of this day of the Son of man. Prepare our hearts for the services of the sanctuary. May thy ministering servant be fraught with the riches of the gospel of Christ. May the people wait on thee with hearts prepared of the Lord, and may the Holy Spirit crown all the services of this day with his presence and blessing. Lord, enlighten the ignorant; subdue the hardened; comfort the distressed; and confirm

and restore the weak and backsliding. We pray for the success of a preached gospel this day throughout the world. Destroy the dominion and existence of false doctrine in thy church, and of superstition in the world. Hasten the glory of the latter day, when the church of Christ shall be universal, and when her people shall be all righteous. Hear these our prayers, and accept of us, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXI. 14.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS LXX. LXXI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

PSALM LXX. Like those of the preceding psalm, the particular causes that led David to the composition of this one are not known. The title of it, taken in connection with the contents, would seem to teach that it was written in commemoration of some heavy affliction, and of the Lord's deliverance from it. Ver. 1—3. In these verses he addresses a prayer to God for deliverance from his enemies, and for the defeat of their wicked devices against him. In ver. 4. he prays that the people of God may have cause, on his account, to rejoice and be glad in the Lord; and ver. 5. concludes with a repetition of his prayer in his own behalf, on the urgent ground that he was poor and needy, and that in God only he had hope of help and deliverance.

PSALM LXXI. This psalm has neither the author's name, nor any title prefixed to it, but it is supposed by many to have been written by David during his son Absalom's rebellion. Ver. 1—14. These contain many petitions for protection and deliverance from his troubles, in the course of which he encourages and sustains himself by recollections of the Lord's loving-kindness and preservation of him from the time that he was 'taken out of his mother's bowels' until that moment. In ver. 14—21. he expresses his firm resolution to persevere in the paths of holiness, and to show forth the salvation of God to that generation, notwithstanding the power and fury of his enemies; he reiterates his petitions for deliverance from their hand, and indulges in the hope of its speedy approach. Ver. 22—24. conclude the psalm with exclamations of his gratitude to God for his manifold mercies, and his purpose to spend his days praising and glorifying God for them all.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Many of the lessons arising out of these two psalms correspond, in a great measure, with those taught in the psalm on which we commented in the morning; we may, however, state a few other practical remarks which they suggest. 1. When adversities overtake us, we should flee to the refuge of God's covenant mercy and love. David did this, and if he did not obtain deliverance from his distresses, he was inspired with strength to endure them. This re-

course to God lessens the bitterness of afflictions, if it does not alleviate their burdensomeness. 2. In all our trials we should, for the confirmation of our faith and hope, remember the Lord's goodness to us in former days and distresses. David encouraged himself, in his afflictions, by remembering how God had been his trust from his youth, and how he had been holden up by him from his mother's womb. Asaph, also, in Psalm xxvii. buoyed up his faith, in his overwhelming distresses, by remembering the years of the right hand of the Most High. The recollection of former instances of God's kind and gracious interposition in behalf of his people, strengthens faith in the perpetuity of his love, even when present trials may not be removed. And, 3. These psalms teach believers that praise is their becoming employment, even when adversities and temptations encompass their path. David is remarkable for praising God with his songs in the darkest night of his tribulations. There are cogent reasons why gratitude should then overflow the hearts of the saints, and praise should burst from their lips: God does not afflict them 'for his pleasure but for their profit, that they may be made partakers of his holiness;' trials are a part of the discipline which the everlasting covenant prescribes for training them to glory, and they are well fitted to separate their affections from idols and entanglements, and to give a heavenliness to their direction. It is in seasons of affliction that the blessed and rejoicing presence of God is most frequently manifested and enjoyed; and it is trials, especially spiritual trials, which most fully conform them to the image of Christ, in which conformity consists their highest honour and happiness. For such reasons as these believers should rejoice in the midst of their tribulations, and say, 'but I will hope continually, and yet praise thee more and more. My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, we desire to approach thee this evening, and to adore thee as the Creator of all things, but especially as the God and Father of all who believe in Christ. We praise thee unfeignedly for thy redeeming mercy revealed through thy Son. We adore the sovereignty of it; we glory in the eternity, the riches, and the unchangeableness of it. O grant that since this everlasting covenant with Christ was devised by thee for the display of thy free grace in the salvation of the chief of sinners, we may be made partakers of its promises and hopes, its graces and its consolations. May all our comforts be covenant blessings, all our afflictions covenant corrections; may we see, in all the events and circumstances of our life, the fruits of Christ's death and the tokens of thy loving-kindness. O may we be thine in Christ; may our sins be forgiven, may our hearts be united to Christ, and may we be made the heirs of heaven, and then we are sure that all things will work together for thy glory

and our eternal good. We pray that thou wouldst bless to us the various dispensations of thy providence and the ordinances of thy grace. Do thou, in a special manner, sanctify our trials and afflictions, our bodily infirmities and diseases, our domestic difficulties and anxieties, our worldly losses and privations, and our reproach and persecution for the sake of Christ. May we have grace in all such trials to imitate thy servant David, of whom we have been reading, who made thee his refuge in his distresses, and who sang of thy mercies as well as of thy judgments. Do thou also bless to us the ordinances of salvation, and the numerous religious privileges we enjoy. May the services in which we have been engaged this day increase our knowledge of Christ, confirm our faith in him, and enlarge our love and devotedness to him. Pardon the languor or the distraction, the impatience or the unbelief, which may have polluted our feeble attempts to serve thee, and let our duties be accepted through the merits of Christ. We desire to feel deeply sensible of our precious privileges and means of improvement in every grace, and may we abound in the use of them more and more. We pray also that thou wouldst extend them to those individuals and nations that are destitute of them. Give efficacy to the gospel wherever it has been preached this day, and open for it a great and effectual door into hearts and regions from which it is still excluded. O clothe thy church in her robes of beauty, and fill her with the Spirit of Christ, and may she spread on the right hand and on the left, until her salvation go forth, like a lamp that burneth, to the remotest and the darkest habitations of heathenism and cruelty. We now thank thee for all the refreshment our souls have received this day in the closet, at the family altar, and in thy sanctuary, and to thee we would commend ourselves this night. Avert from our dwelling the steps of the evil doer, and the calamities to which we are exposed by fire, and by tempest, and by flood. Grant to us all refreshing sleep, and freedom from evil thoughts and dreams upon our beds, and may we awake in the morning in the enjoyment of health, with thankful hearts, and with strength and willingness for the duties of this week. But if thou hast ordained for any of us a sudden and unexpected summons into thy presence this night, O may our souls be prepared, by thy Spirit, for entering upon the services and joys of heaven. Hear these our prayers, as all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 30—37.

SCRIPTURE—1 KINGS XII.

REMARKS.

Ver. 15. 'For the cause was from the Lord,' that is, it was his purpose,—and not only his secret and eternal purpose, but it had been declared by his prophet Ahijah. Though, however, the cause was from God, yet the sin and error of the judgment are alone chargeable on Rehoboam and his foolish advisers. The counsel of God shall stand; yet in that the responsibility of every decision rests with man. Ver. 28. Jeroboam's sin was a flagrant violation of the second commandment. He did not profess to introduce new gods, but he made graven images, and worshipped them. God hates and forbids the worship of himself by images. He is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit.

What a contrast between the wisdom of Solomon and the folly of his son! How strikingly exhibited in their two judgments, which are particularly recorded. From the case before us let us learn the importance of choosing counsellors of experience, especially those who have had great opportunities of learning wisdom, as was true of these old men, for 'they stood before Solomon.'

It may seem strange that the kingdom established under David, and still farther confirmed under Solomon, should so soon be rent in twain, and only a small share be left to David's line; and it may seem still more strange how this could be from God, when its immediate effects were a fearful schism and heresy in the church. But all was according to the counsel of the Wisest; the folly and wrath of man shall alike praise him. How does it lighten what is dark, and inspire hope amidst the greatest gloom and sadness, when we can say, in regard to anything, 'This thing is from God!' This stills rising doubt and fear, and calms all into submission.

The conduct of Rehoboam and Jeroboam, after the separation, may occasion no little surprise. As the former is represented in the early part of the chapter only as haughty, misguided, and rash, we are scarcely prepared for that instant and entire obedience he yields to God's message by the prophet. Though insolent and tyrannical to his subjects, he yet showed obedience and submission to the will of the Lord, and that even in the heat of his irritation, and with a hundred and eighty thousand men to support him.

How ungrateful and wicked the conduct of Jeroboam! Though the Lord, whom he had already found to be faithful, had promised, that if he would walk in his ways and keep his statutes and commandments, he would build him a sure house, and give Israel unto him; yet through sinful mistrust in God, and presumptuous confidence in his own policy, he dissuaded the people from going up to Jerusalem to worship, and erected calves for them at Beth-el and Dan. How often do we show a similar spirit, and by our short-sighted and misdirected efforts seek to hasten or mend God's designs. Let the example of Jeroboam teach us that God has not only his ends,

but his ways, and that any attempt of ours to alter or improve them tends only to evil. We must be ready always to follow when God leads, and are honoured even at times to be fellow-workers; but we must never go before, far less go against them.

The people seem to have been easily drawn over to the idolatry and will-worship of the new king. This greatly enhanced his guilt, as is manifest from its being so often repeated by the sacred historian, that 'he sinned, and made Israel to sin,' seducing them to the worship of idols. And if 'the power of Jeroboam was so great for evil, what might it have been, by the blessing of God, for good? How much may it thus be in the power of a king to promote the glory of God and his pure worship. The character of Jeroboam may thus in this case be completely reversed, and it may be said of him that he not only serves God himself, but leads others to serve him.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, thou art the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Thou rulest supreme over all, directing every thing for thy glory and the accomplishment of thy gracious designs. It is thou that raisest up and bringest low; thou woundest and thou healest; thou killest and thou makest alive. May we ever recognize and cheerfully submit to thy sovereignty, and even where we do not understand, teach us, O Lord, submissively to bow. O Lord, who alone art to be feared, we confess that we have not honoured thee as thou oughtest to be honoured. We have been proud and selfish, consulting our own pleasure, rather than thy glory, and leaning to our own understanding rather than seeking and waiting for the wisdom which is profitable to direct. O do thou forgive us this sin, and all our sins. Enter not into judgment with us, else we could not stand before thee. It is written in thy word, that if we confess our sins thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness; O Lord, we make a free and a full confession of all, we have no excuse and no apology to offer; for we have sinned against the clearest light and greatest grace, but for Christ's sake we pray and hope for mercy. We would put thee in remembrance of his sufferings and his death for us. Accept of this in the room of ours; through his stripes may we be healed, through his death may we live. O Lord, the fountain of all wisdom, direct us in all our decisions and endeavours. May we ever avoid the company and the counsels of the ungodly and the unwise, and choose as our associates and advisers those in whom is the fear of God, and who are partakers of heavenly wisdom. Teach us, gracious Father, ever to distrust ourselves, but to put our whole trust and dependence on thee alone. Lord, not our will,

but thine, be done. And even at those times when trials and dangers await us, and when our anxiety and fear are greatest, then most of all would we renounce our own wisdom, which at best is folly, and rather say with our Redeemer, when in his great agony, Father, glorify thy name. Keep us from presumptuous sins; from prying into the secret things which belong unto God; or interfering with thy works or ways. Lord, bless our native land. May our sovereign ever be preserved from false and foolish counsellors, and be led always to do what will be for thy glory and the good of the people. And O may our religious privileges be maintained in purity, and transmitted unimpaired to the latest posterity. Preserve us ever from idolatry, superstition, and will-worship. Almighty God, our constant preserver, we thank thee that we are alive and well this morning. Help us to remember the solemn exercises of yesterday. May we carry much of the solemnity and sacredness of the Lord's day into all the duties and exercises of the week. We need thy protection not only in the darkness of the night, but even in the bright sunshine of the day. Stretch over us the wings of thy Providence. We commend our friends to thy friendship, and our relations to an intimate relationship with thee. Sympathize with the sick and the afflicted. Bless all. Add this day to the number of those that shall be saved. Christ, strengthen thine own people. O Lord, hear, and answer, and accept of us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLIII.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XVI.

REMARKS.

The followers of Christ must not count it a strange thing when persecution or trial comes upon them. It is only what their Master foretold, only what prophets and holy men in every age have experienced. Blessed, then, are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; they experience a new proof of Christ's foresight and faithfulness; they have a new evidence of their following in the footsteps of those who are now inheriting the promises, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before them. When injured by others, we should pray for rather than be angry with them; we should regret more that God's law is broken, and Christ's cause hated, than that we personally suffer. Besides, as the evil treatment of such proceeds from their ignorance, because, while they think they are doing God service,

they 'know not the Father nor the Son,' we should be ready to pardon, and say, as did the dying Saviour of his persecutors, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

The disciples sorrowed for the absence of Christ, without caring whither he was to go: they indulged only the natural feeling, forgetful of what might have enlarged their knowledge, confirmed their faith, and animated their hope. How true a description this of many when bereaved. Sorrow so fills their heart that there seems no room for any other feeling; whereas, this is the very time when the unseen and the future should be realized as visible and present; when he who is the resurrection and the life should be especially dear, and the promise, 'he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live again,' especially precious.

How strange that Christ should say to his sorrowing disciples, 'it is expedient for you that I go away.' What friend like Christ, yet the Holy Spirit was to supply his place, and abide with them for ever. What teacher like him 'who spake as never man spake,' yet the Spirit would guide them unto all truth, and bring all things to their remembrance. What success could they expect in their contest with the world, when their Master was gone? Yet his absence would make it greater. He, when glorified, was to send his Spirit, who would convince the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. When he was poured out, there would be a more penitent and wide-spread confession of sins,—a clearer view, and more extensive putting on of Christ's righteousness, and his power and authority would be more conspicuously displayed in the condemnation and overthrow of the great adversary. But does not the coming and power of the Spirit detract from the glory of Christ? By no means. 'He shall glorify me;' and just as the copiousness of the stream proves only the fulness of the fountain, so the effects of the Spirit's coming only glorify him who sends him. The disciples were very dull at comprehending, and very slow of heart to believe Christ's approaching sufferings, death, and resurrection. But the event explained all; they now saw everything clearly, and rejoiced.

Christ is not only our advocate with the Father, but his righteousness is our only plea. And it is sufficient; we need no more; for 'whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.' Well, then, may we come with boldness, that we may obtain mercy to pardon, and grace to help us. It is by asking much that our joy shall be full, and the more we ask, we put the greater honour on Christ, and show our stronger faith in the Father's love. Believers are not told that they shall have no trials, but that they shall be supported under them, and delivered out of them. Though often tossed on a stormy sea, they have always a haven near, to which they can repair. 'In me ye shall have peace.' This word is true. Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than it prove false. Why art thou then cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? In the world ye shall have tribulation. but in Christ ye shall have peace.

PRAYER.

Most gracious God, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and who hast promised, that for his sake thou wilt hear us always, we beseech thee at this time to behold us in mercy. Look upon us, not as we are in ourselves, guilty and polluted, but behold us in Christ, righteous and accepted. We approach thee as our Father, through Jesus our surety and intercessor; we have no merit and no claims of our own, but we have a strong plea in the name of Christ. Of this would we make mention, and on this would we entirely rely. In ourselves we are vile, and deserve thy wrath and curse. O Lord, we deserve thy fiercest wrath, thy heaviest stroke; the lowest pit of hell might well be our portion. But we believe, and are sure, that Christ died for sinners, even the chief, and that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. O that we could realize Christ more as our Saviour; as having suffered and died for us, that we might be righteous; as ready to impart to us all the benefits of his death, all the riches of his grace. We believe that the Lord Jesus is now exalted at thy right hand, and he, whose word is true, promised that he would send the Spirit unto his people. We plead that promise; we entreat its fulfilment. O may the Holy Ghost be poured out from on high. May he be given to us, that we may be convinced of sin, of our need of a Saviour, and that Christ is the very Saviour we need, having a righteousness sufficient to justify us, and power to subdue us unto himself, and to restrain and conquer all his and our enemies. May we, being full of the Spirit, hate sin and glorify Christ. May that Spirit show us every day more of the loveliness, excellency, and glory of our great Redeemer, that we may extol him more, and give our whole hearts unreservedly to him. May we be both sanctified and comforted by the Holy Ghost, and grow in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation. Sanctify to us all our trials and bereavements. O thou who of old didst enable the followers of Christ to glory even in the death of their Master, and to rejoice that he was taken from them, do thou enable us to rejoice in all our tribulations; to feel, when suffering under thy rod, that it is in very faithfulness thou dost afflict us, and to say, when the very desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke, The Lord gave and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord. O Lord, who art slow to wrath, and ready to forgive, we beseech thee to pardon the sins and short-comings of this day. In everything we offend and come short, but

with thee there is forgiveness, that thou mayst be feared, and plenteous redemption, that thou mayst be sought unto. O Lord, we could not lie down this night in peace, we could not rest in our beds, if we thought thou wert angry with us. We beseech thee, then, to be reconciled to us through Christ. May we know, that though once thou wert angry with us, yet now thine anger is turned away. We commend ourselves, and all dear to us, to thy preserving and protecting care during the night. May no evil come near our persons or dwelling, but may we be spared to see the light of another day, and when we awake may we find thee still with us. Hear, good Lord, we beseech thee, these our prayers, and grant us all we need, and far more than we can ask, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 12.

SCRIPTURE—1 KINGS XIII.

REMARKS.

The death of the prophet is plainly penal, the consequence of his sin, because he turned back and ate and drank. But where is the justice of this? It ought to be a sufficient proof of its justice that God did it. However much we may pity the prophet who returned, and though the lie of the other was clearly the occasion of bringing him back, yet that does not justify his conduct. God is true, and changeth not. The intimation of his will was in this case express, and never recalled. This, then, was his sin, that he did not believe and rest on the truth and faithfulness of God, and for this he died. It was no vindication of Eve's disobedience that the devil said, 'thou shalt not surely die;' so neither in the case before us.

How great the blindness and sin of those who, in spite of the many express prophecies of scripture, and their clear fulfilment, deny its divine inspiration. Who but are taught of God could have known, three hundred and fifty years before it happened, that one Josiah by name was to rule in Judah, and act as is here foretold? How watchful God's care of his servants, especially when executing his commissions. The Lord bore all Jeroboam's contempt of himself and perversion of his worship; and yet when he stretched out his hand against his servant, it withered in a moment. How bold and fearless, then, may his servants be in denouncing God's wrath against the ungodly and profane, for then, especially, may they expect him to be their defence and their safety.

It may be, that the man of God from Judah, when sitting under the oak, was secretly approving himself for having so faithfully executed God's commission, and resisted every solicitation. He was thus, when lifted up in his own eyes, prepared to fall, and that by listening to the suggestions of the old prophet.

Having already done as God directed, he perhaps thought that now he might follow his own inclination, and go back, and eat and drink. How needful to beware, lest the successful resisting of temptation be not itself a snare, and a former victory, through Satan's artifices, become the occasion of subsequent and irrecoverable defeat. Let us be on our guard, also, against those pretending to make known to us the will of God. 'Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God.' 'Many false prophets are gone out into the world.' 'To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.'

How ready are we to seek the Lord in distress, and beseech him to remove his hand from off us, and yet when our prayer is heard, deliverance experienced, and prosperity returns, God is not in all our thoughts. What a dreadful account of our hearts, that the very event which should endear the Lord more to us, and make us trust in him at all times, should make us indifferent about him, and cease regarding him! Such was Jeroboam's case. In spite of the deliverance he experienced, and God's judgments on the prophet who was led astray, he returned not from his evil way. We need not only judgments and chastisements, but grace to improve them. These cannot renew the heart; there must be the putting forth of God's own Spirit, else no good will follow.

PRAYER.

Most gracious God, our preserver from day to day, we approach thy footstool at this time with grateful hearts, to thank thee for thy watchful care during the night, and for all the blessings of this morning. We count it a great privilege that we are permitted and enabled to worship thee in the family; and as thou dost not now require the sacrifice of bulls or goats, we would desire to give thee the sacrifice of meek and contrite hearts. We come to thee, O Lord, through the blood of Christ, that full and perfect sacrifice that was once offered, and we earnestly beseech thee that through him we may find access to thy throne of grace. May our prayers ascend before thee, perfumed with the much incense of a Saviour's merits. We pray, Lord, for a meek and submissive spirit. May we never, like Jeroboam, murmur at thy threatenings or despise thy warnings; but may the terrors of the Lord persuade us, that we may repent before it be too late, and seek for mercy while it is to be found. We thank thee that the miseries and danger of a life of sin are so clearly pointed out in thy word, and that salvation and happiness are to be found in Christ Jesus. O God, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, we have to confess with shame before thee our great transgressions. What a holy law we have broken! what a gracious Father we have disobeyed! we have sinned against the clearest light. Thy great goodness

herein served to call forth our heinous ingratitude and rebellion. How often have we sought thee in our adversity, in want, anxiety, or distress; and yet when relief was given, and health and prosperity returned, the Lord has not been in all our thoughts. How often have thy very answers to prayer, and deliverances vouchsafed, instead of endearing thee the more to us, and filling our hearts with new joy in thee, been the very occasion of estranging our affections from thee, and making us follow after vanity. O Lord, who art rich in mercy and slow to wrath, forgive our deep transgressions, and give us grace in time to come to improve by all thy dispensations; to see thy hand in all, and bless thee for all. Help us, O Lord, to consider and lay to heart what we have now been reading of thy strictness to mark iniquity, and of thy great jealousy over thy word. Teach us how dangerous it is to leave any thing undone which thou hast commanded, or to act in any thing contrary to thy revealed will. May we be watchful and faithful. Give us a love to thy law: a delight in thy commandments. May we regard whatsoever thou hast required as not only the law of thy authority, but the law of thy grace; given because thou lovest us, and seekest our good alway. Preserve us, O Lord, from lying prophets and false teachers, professing a charge from thee while they have received none. Bring down Antichrist, and all speaking lies in hypocrisy; but do thou own and honour thine own servants. Increase the number of faithful ministers, and increase greatly their success. Give them many seals of their ministry. Bless our own pastor; may he be a blessing to all committed to his charge. May we learn the law at his mouth, and find him an ambassador of Christ to us; every day enlarging our knowledge and confirming us in the faith. Bless the neighbourhood where we dwell. May pure and undefiled religion prevail amongst us. May this place be as a field which the Lord hath blessed. Be with us this day, in our going out and coming in; do thou go before us and watch over us. Keep us from all evil, but especially from sin, the greatest of all. Hear these our prayers, and grant us more than we can either ask or think, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 18.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XVII.

REMARKS.

This chapter contains the prayer of Christ before his departure. In it he prays for himself that he may be glorified, and for his people that they may be kept, sanctified, united here, and finally glorified hereafter. This prayer was offered with the greatest solemnity of manner, and the deepest fervour and unction of spirit. 'The hour is come,' refers evidently to the hour of his approaching sufferings and decease. Jesus knew well the work he had undertaken, with the severity and the hour of his great agony, so that he was at no time taken by surprise, but went forward unmoved to meet his arrayed and fiercest foes. 'Glorify thy Son.' The hour of Christ's sufferings was also the hour of his glory; his death was his triumph; even on the cross such evidence was given to his greatness, as to induce the soldiers standing by to say, 'truly this was the Son of God.' The death of Christ is what believers glory in here; it is what the redeemed in bliss shall celebrate to all eternity. O that we could so look at the cross of Christ, as to see there reflected, as in a bright mirror, all the attributes of God; his holiness, justice, truth, and love, all mutually illustrating each other, each heightening the other's glory, while its own lustre remains undiminished. Well then might Christ pray in the prospect of this, and all the blessed consequences that would result from his death, 'glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.' See chap. xii. 23, 24. and xiii. 31.

Our Lord having spoken of what he had done for his own, and the reception they gave him, offers up, in the 9th and following verses, his petitions on their behalf. Here we have a specimen of that constant intercession which our great High Priest, now that he has ascended into the heavens, is, without ceasing, offering up for his people. This is a special prayer for his own. Whatever may be his sympathies for the world at large, however much he may pity them that perish, and devise that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, yet here we have a special prayer for his own church; first, for his immediate disciples, and then for all that should believe in him through their word. In ver. 11. our Saviour speaks as if he desired that after his removal his heavenly Father would look on his disciples as coming in his place, to share the same affection, and enjoy the same favour which he himself had enjoyed. And as he had kept them while in the world, so now he desires to surrender them up to the Father, who by his Spirit supplies Christ's absence, and leads and guides them that believe.

That Christ's will respecting us should be accomplished, it is not necessary that we should be taken out of the world, either literally by death immediately after conversion, or otherwise by entering into a separate place, away from all intercourse with the world, and from all the opportunities of usefulness which our station supplies. Christians are not to be of the world, though in the world. It is enough

that the Lord keeps us from the evil for which Christ prays, and which by the Spirit is done. Ver. 21—26. Jesus prays especially that the church may be one, and that all its members may be joined together in love and intimate communion. How opposed then to the will of Christ, and how offensive in his sight all divisions and distractions in the church, especially when these are attended with unkind, unbrotherly, and angry feelings. It is Christ in his people that will heal their divisions, and make them perfect in one. O what need of watchfulness, that while steadfast for the truth, and true to Christ, we may yet cherish the kindest feelings to all, especially those that are of the household of faith. But our Lord prays not only first for the purity, and then for the unity of his people here, but also that they may be with him for ever. Their desire is to be with Christ, which is far better. His will is that they may be with him where he is. Thus will his joy be full, and they also will enter into the joy of their Lord.

PRAYER.

O Lord, our heavenly Father, we draw near to thee this evening, as children to a father, able and ready to help us. We rejoice that Jesus died for us. May we honour his death, and glory in his cross. May we count this a pledge of love unspeakable, and love him who first and so loved us. We rejoice that he who died for our sins was raised again for our justification, and is now at thy right hand pleading for his people. O may we, who are the chief of sinners, through the merits and mediation of Christ be justified, accepted, and saved. Lord, make us monuments of thy redeeming love, trophies of Christ's power. May we be saved, that Christ may see of the travail of his soul in us, and that we through all eternity may be monuments to the glory of his grace. Father, save us, that we may glorify thee; give us thy Spirit, that we may be quickened to serve thee. Sanctify us, create in us clean hearts, and renew in us right spirits, that we may be altogether such as thou wouldst have us to be; that from our renewed hearts thy image may be fully reflected; that all our motives and devices may be for thy glory. O may those members and faculties of ours which have hitherto been too much instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, become henceforth all of them the instruments of righteousness unto God. May thy good Spirit sanctify us wholly through thy truth, and may thy glory and praise be the end of all. O Lord, thou who hast a peculiar people of thine own, separate them more and more unto thyself; preserve them from the evil that is in the world, make them bold and decided in thy cause; and knowing what thou hast promised, and what Christ has asked, and is ever asking, may they be strong in thee, and hold fast the

beginning of their confidence firm unto the end. Heal, we beseech thee, the breaches of Zion. May Ephraim no longer envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim; but may all rejoice together. Lord, grant that all true Christians may press nearer to Christ, their common Head, that thus they may be more closely united to each other. May a spirit of mutual forbearance and mutual love be poured out, and may our great striving be how best to promote the glory of our common Lord. O thou who hast no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and wouldst rather that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, add daily to the number of those who shall be saved. May thy kingdom come, both at home and abroad, in our hearts, and throughout the world. O speedily give to Christ the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Give much of thy Spirit to all ministers and missionaries of the truth; the more their difficulties and obstacles, the more help do thou give them from on high. We thank thee, gracious Father, for thy kind preservation of us during the day. Pardon the sins of this day, we beseech thee. Watch over us during the night. May our last and our first thoughts be ever of thee. Guide us by thy counsel here, and afterwards receive us up into glory. Bless all our relations and friends. Reward our benefactors, forgive our enemies, and teach us to forgive them. Hear, we beseech thee, these our petitions, and answer us, not according to the error or feebleness of our desires, but according to thy perfect knowledge of our wants, and thine own great mercies, for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 57.

SCRIPTURE—1 KINGS XV.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—8. The most flourishing prosperity, to which the religious state of any nation may be advanced, is no guarantee that such prosperity shall be perpetuated. Genuine piety and love to God, are heirlooms entailed upon no family of earth. Not even the wisdom of Solomon could keep him from declining from the steps of his father David. Rehoboam saw without regret, and permitted without restraint, the vilest abominations of idolatry, to supersede the pure worship of the holy Jehovah; he interposed not, when his wife, the daughter of Absalom, set up her idol grove. Abijam copied his impiety and indifference, and thus provoked the Lord to cut short his reign. But though God was angry

with the family of David, to have removed it out of his sight, he yet was gracious for David's sake. 'He had once sworn in his holiness, that he would not lie unto David,' therefore did he give Abijam a son to succeed him on the throne. He would not put out in utter darkness the lamp he had ordained for his anointed. But while the covenant remained sure, and he would not pass from it, he branded David's sin with the mark of his abiding hate. Even when recording his own faithfulness, to the promises of the well-ordered covenant, which so gladdened the heart of his servant, and shed such a brilliant glory on his departing hours, the matter of Uriah the Hittite shall not be forgotten; for thus shall it be manifest to latest generations that grace does its work, purely because it is grace. Ver. 9—15. But if piety and love to God are not possessions which a father can entail upon his son; blessed be his name, neither are ungodliness and graceless habits. The wicked Abijam is the father of pious Asa, and the short-lived reign of the one is followed by the long and prosperous reign of the other. It is cheering to dwell upon Asa's character. He was a man of God; 'his heart was perfect with the Lord.' Earthly relationships were dear to him; earthly rank had doubtless all due respect at his hands; but such relationship and rank were utter trifles to him, when put in competition with the claims of his God; and even his grandmother, and she a queen, was not spared in the day of reformation; she must as much yield to his zeal for the purity of God's worship, her idol grove must as utterly perish, as the upholders of the sin of Sodom perished under his vengeful sword. The perfect heart, being God's workmanship, has no respect of persons. Ver. 16—22. The zeal of Asa's perfect heart for the purity and perfection of God's worship, prompted in him due regard for the privileges and unrestrained liberty of his worshippers. And therefore, lest Baasha, by fortifying Ramah, which lay in the tribe of Benjamin, upon the north border, between Judah and Israel, should prevent pious Israelites from coming to worship at Jerusalem, Asa struggled hard to put a stop to his design. How ought we to regret that the perfect heart of Asa did not here display itself in reliance upon the arm of the Lord, instead of permitting his worldly policy to rob the royal treasury and the house of God, in order to bribe an arm of flesh! Ver. 23—34. The Lord visits the sins of the fathers upon the children. Nadab came to the throne, only to undergo the doom pronounced upon Jeroboam his father, who made Israel to sin. The eyes of the Lord can search out every one, against whom his word goeth forth—none shall escape his hand. How fearful the fruits of one man's sin! Son and nephew—grand-children, kindred, all are swept away. The Lord could endure the sight neither of that man's seed, nor his kindred who had laid the first step of the impiety, which, in the end, removed his beloved Israel from the land of their fathers. And even as Jeroboam was raised up from the dust to fill the throne, a man, as mean as himself, is raised up to rend it from his family. A man from the most obscure tribe in Israel, from a quarter where no opposition was expected, rose and smote

Nadab, amid his captains and his mighty men: and the house of Jeroboam, which, in the day of its strength, could win one kingdom for itself, and bid defiance to another, in the day of retribution miserably fell before the might of a private individual. The strongest has no strength, and the weakest has all might, in the day when he who has all hands and all hearts in his hand, is pleased to command it so.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, we approach unto thee this morning, through Jesus Christ our great High Priest and intercessor, beseeching thee to lift on us the light of thy reconciled countenance. We bless thee that thou givest mercy, not because we are worthy, but because thou art gracious, and in covenant with thy Son, to bestow mercy upon thy chosen. May we be of thy number. Impress upon our heart and conscience, the great lessons taught us by the portion of thy word we have now read, and meditated upon. Out of the treasury of thy grace may the love of God, and thy quickening Spirit, be poured out upon us, to deepen in our hearts the memory of thy great goodness, and our present unworthiness and past guilt. O gracious Father, make our heart perfect to follow thee fully. Help us to search out thy whole counsel, and incline us to walk by it. Let not the love of earthly ties, let not the claims of earthly rank, lead us from the path of duty; but help us ever to fear and love thee, and, relying upon thy strength, may we have courage to break loose from the fear of man, which bringeth a snare. Give us growing zeal for thy glory, that we may both glorify thee ourselves, and lead others to fear thy name. Spare us, we entreat thee; pour not on us the vengeance we deserve; let not our portion be with the Jeroboams of this world, who make Israel to sin. May it be ours in the might of thy Spirit, and the energy of thy grace, to redeem the time, and so to lift up a testimony for thee, that the sinners around us may be won to thy service, when they behold our holy conversation, coupled with fear. We would deplore the evil of sin, and confess thy spotless justice in visiting it with the rod of thy vengeance. We would deplore the desolations it has wrought in our own hearts and in the world; and lament the ruin it has wrought to thine own Israel. And we would pray, that whilst thou givest full triumph to thy word in our hearts, so that they be renewed in thy sight; while thou crownest with success the efforts of Christian ministers and missionaries, so that from the rising to the going down of the sun thy name may be praised; we would pray, that whilst thou graciously doest all this, thou wouldst have mercy speedily on

Israel, and mercy on Judah; that, as one nation, they may be restored to their own land, and the privileges of the covenant. May the good Lord hasten this in his time. We bless thee for the mercies of the night; keep us in thy fear throughout the day. Keep our going out and our coming in, and spare us, that we may, at the close of the day, again surround thy throne of grace with songs of rejoicing, and say, Blessed be the Lord God, who hath not turned away our prayer from him, nor his mercy from us. Hear us graciously, and answer us according to the abundance of thy love, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXII. 23.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XVIII. 1—24.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—6. While the endearing loveliness of our Lord's character manifested itself the more fully in the midst of his disciples, the nearer the period of separation from them drew on, so also did the noble majesty of that character shine more conspicuously, as the hour approached when he must resist unto blood, striving against sin. How earthly are our hearts, and sluggish our souls, that do not manifest livelier impressions from meditation on these wonderful truths! Jesus knew that all things written concerning him in the scriptures must now be accomplished. The traitor was already gathering a mob, and arming the ruffian band, which was to deliver him to the Jewish council. But Gethsemane had already witnessed the first sad scene of the sufferings of a soul sorrowful even to death. Already had Jesus been upheld to drink with resignation of the bitter cup; already had this foretaste of his woe, brought with it, in angel visits, a foretaste of his final triumph, and strong in the might of omnipotence, he went forth to meet his foes. Let us go with him, not to die with him, but to behold and admire the dignity of the Son of God, before the band of rebels that sought his life. Undaunted he asks, 'Whom seek ye?' unmoved he hears the reply, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Let us behold also his sovereign might, and tremble before it. The answer of the great I AM, felled his enemies to the ground. In a moment Judas and his band were wallowing on the earth. Truly never man spake like this man. And he wrought this miracle, to show that he laid down his life of his own free will; no man took it from him. How gracious was Jesus, to raise his prostrate foes; how condescending to yield to them!

Ver. 6—11. Yet he interposed again, but on behalf of those he loved, not on his own. He had given proof of his ability to rescue himself; but now his hour was come, and he would not. He pled only for the safety of his disciples. 'If ye seek me, let these go away.' O the compassion of a suffering Saviour, though he knew they would all forsake him in his hour

of need! There is no spot in the character or conduct of the Son of God. Does he act in his own behalf? It is in majesty, sublime, omnipotent. Does he plead for his disciples? It is unutterable tenderness. All is becoming his dignity as God, his sympathy as man. But alas! for his disciples, sinful men; Judas fingers the price of his blood, and betrays him with a kiss. Peter, rash, thoughtless, head-strong, provokes the fury of enemies, even after Jesus has secured his freedom from injury and attack. Peter would still have had his Lord turn from devoting his life a ransom for souls. But Jesus had pledged himself to drink the cup of vengeance, and 'he was not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent.'

Ver. 12—24. And now let us turn and behold the Lord of glory bound, and in the hands of sinful men. He who with the might of ten thousand Samsons, might have burst his fetters as easily as bands of burned thread, was now 'led as a lamb to the slaughter.' Peter also followed, but afar off. (Luke xxii. 54.) Already was his hot-headed courage cooled, and when he gained the midst of his Master's enemies, it had entirely vanished. The challenge of the high priest's maid-servant was sufficient to daunt him, and he denied his Lord. Alas! his fire of love had gone out. It was smothered under the ashes of fallen and mortified pride. Let us condemn this cowardice, but remember how often we have acted Peter's part. If we wonder at his pusillanimity, let us look to ourselves. The sight of our own heart will quell every rising of our tongues to upbraid the fallen apostle, or glory over him. May the Lord ever preserve us from such a fall as his; and enable us, in the hour of trial, to show that we know the Saviour in the power of his resurrection, as well as in the fellowship of his sufferings.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most gracious God, we draw near to thy throne of grace through the blood and intercession of thine own dear Son, to glorify thee for the mercies of the past day, and to cast ourselves upon thy kindness and care for the coming night. Ever blessed be thy holy name, that the Lord Jesus condescended, in the fulness of his zeal for thy glory, and his compassion for us, to undertake and accomplish the work of our redemption. We would be humbled to the dust because of our sins, when we reflect upon the sufferings that Jesus endured on our account. O help us to see and to acknowledge that it was not Jewish malice and Gentile cruelty that bound and scourged him, crowned him with thorns, and nailed him to the cross; but our sins that exposed him to the hidings of thy countenance, and the fierceness of thy wrath. O grant that the Holy Spirit, whose office it is alone to take of the things of Christ and show them to thy people, may so manifest to us the sufferings of the Saviour, as to impress our hearts with just views of the evil of sin, and

thereby incline us to hate it with a perfect heart. May that Spirit fill our hearts with the love of Christ, that we may love him who first loved us, who gave himself for us, and now intercedes on our behalf, at thine own right hand. And grant, O Lord, while we contemplate with wonder the firmness and courage of the Lord Jesus in his day of trial, while we glorify thee, that he shrunk not from the dreadest sufferings, that we may, in the apostacy of Judas, and the fall of Peter, discern our own weakness, and our utter inability to stand of ourselves in the hour of temptation. Grant, we entreat thee, that the contemplation of our Saviour's sufferings, and his disciples' weakness, may fill us with humbling views of what we ourselves are; and constrain us to leave ourselves in the hands of him who alone has grace sufficient for us. May we be able daily to carry about with us in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. May Christ live in us. May we live for him, and to his glory. Let the knowledge of his redemption spread in the world. Give success to all missionary efforts, and the labours of thy ministering servants, and may the time speedily come when all ends of the earth shall turn unto the Lord, and all nations do him homage. Bless us with grace throughout the coming night. As the sun has not smitten us by day, so neither let the moon by night. Refresh us with the rest of thy beloved, and raise us up to the health and strength of a new day. And under the constant guidance of thy supporting and sanctifying grace, may we be prepared to lie down in the grave in peace, and wake on the resurrection morn to the glories and blessedness of eternal life. All we ask is in and through the name of Jesus Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVI. 1—7.

SCRIPTURE—1 KINGS XVI.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—7. Let us behold here the majesty of him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. Let us listen to his voice. By him kings reign. By him are their thrones established or overturned. Baasha was raised up from the lowest origin to execute righteous vengeance on the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin. He ought therefore to have taken warning from the doom of that monarch. But he walked in the same steps, and exposed himself and his family to the same vengeance. Nay, his slaughter of Jeroboam was sin. Though he exe-

cuted the predetermined counsel of Jehovah, and swept away the object of his curse, yet not only was his personal following the sin of Jeroboam an element in his condemnation, but retributive vengeance visited on his head the murder of his sovereign. Ver. 8—14. Low indeed must the royal house of Israel have now been sunk, when its monarch so far forgot his dignity as to perpetrate a drunken debauch in the house of his steward. To what fearful hazard does a drunkard expose himself! Elah died indeed as a fool dieth. Intoxication had bound his hands and fettered his feet. He could neither resist nor flee. Fear doubtless prompted Zimri, irrespective of the prophet's doom, to cut off the family, friends, and kinsfolk of Baasha, that he might secure the throne which his covetous ambition had instigated him to attempt. But thereby God fulfilled his word. He can accomplish his will by the passions and the pride of men, as well as by their well-directed wisdom and energy. Ver. 15—20. How short lived was the reign of Zimri! only seven days, one short week, but long enough for the purpose of trying him, and proving that he too would walk in the ways of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin. Vengeance slumbered not, and on the day of retribution, neither the walls of Tirzah, nor the splendour of the royal palace, stood him in stead. Tremble, O our souls, at the doings of the Lord. Ver. 20—34. It is sad for a people to be torn between the contentions of usurpers of the throne. Israel had sinned grievously in revolting from the house of David; more grievously still in so readily falling in with Jeroboam's revolt from the pure worship of God. They were made to drink deep of the cup they had thus mingled for themselves. Scarcely had the tumult and confusion of one sedition, and the murder of their monarch, subsided, ere a similar scene occurred; and they, who would have idolatry, had it at length to the full. Omri was more vile and wicked than his predecessors; and, as if it had been a light thing for him and them to turn more than ever from the will of God, his son Ahab sold himself, in company with Jezebel, his idolatrous wife, to work wickedness greedily. The sin of Jeroboam would not satisfy them. The way of sin is precipitate. Take but one step of corruption in the worship of the true God, and the next is an utter forsaking of Jehovah for Baal. Alas, for poor Israel, the cup was rapidly filling; the blood of murdered sovereigns, the calves of Dan and Beth-el, the groves and high places, and the images of Baal, were sad symptoms of wide-spread depravity. Yet did the long-suffering of God wait in these days as well as in the days of Noah.

How sure is the word of Jehovah! No distance of place, no length of time, can alter it, or blot out the memory of it. The curse, uttered centuries before by the lips of Joshua, as surely came to pass as the prophecy of Jehu, the son of Hanani, which was only of eight years' standing. It was but a miserable consolation that the builder of Jericho had in contemplating his finished work. Amid all the strength of its walls and the splendour of its edifices, he sat down childless. His eldest, smitten at the foundations of the city, lay long mouldered to dust; and the gates, so lately set up, were first opened to give a passage to

the mournful procession that carried the youngest to the tomb. The sinner, bent on accomplishing his own will, makes light of every warning, till his loss is irreparable. O let us not condemn Hiel the Bethelite, without remembering how often we too have pursued our iniquities, and flattered ourselves in the indulgence of them till we have found them hateful. Truly the end of these things is death.

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever-blessed Jehovah, thou art a great King above all gods, even the King of kings and Lord of lords. We draw near to thy throne in the name and through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. We rejoice that thy throne is a throne of mercy, that it is not as the thrones of men, a throne of wickedness, but that justice and judgment are the habitations thereof, and that mercy and truth go continually before thee. We would acknowledge thy hand in the affairs of men and of nations. Thou doest with the monarchs of the earth and the governments of the world what it pleaseth thee. O who shall stand if once thou art angry? Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity. Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross; and in the day of thy vengeful wrath, nothing can save them from thy hand. Blessed for ever be thy name that thy throne is a throne of grace, from which thou dispensest, to the poor and the miserable, blessings of grace and salvation, without money and without price, and that we are invited to come and ask that we may receive. O most holy God, we are vile and polluted transgressors. Put us not away in thine anger, chasten us not in thy hot displeasure; but, for Jesus' sake, visit us with thy salvation, and teach us to call thee Father, that we may hate our sins with all our heart, and turn from them to serve thee. When we see thy vengeance poured out on them that depart from thee, when we see how their sorrows are multiplied who hasten after other gods, O make us willing to bow in lowly submission before thee, as the true, the only God; yea, to take thee, as revealed in the Lord Jesus, to be our reconciled God and Father, to avouch thee to be our God even now and for ever. O Lord, we acknowledge the perverseness of our will, and lament the ungodliness of our natural heart. We deplore before thee that we should be so blind to the evil of sin, as that abominable thing which thou hatest, and so hard to be persuaded that it is ruinous to ourselves. O gracious God, leave us not to be hardened to our ruin. May thy Spirit, who is of might and power to show us our transgressions, impress our hearts with true convictions of sin, and lead us to hate it with a perfect hatred. May he fill our

hearts with holy desires and heavenly affections. May he wash us with the washing of regeneration, and visit us with his renewing influence, so shall we be thine indeed. Redeemed with the blood of Jesus from the power of sin and satan, justified freely by thy grace, adopted into thy family, and sanctified to bear his image, who is the first-born among many brethren, we shall then be able to live blameless and harmless, the children of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life. We bless thee for the mercies of the bypast night and this morning. Carry us out this day in thy fear, and under the guidance of thy Holy Spirit. May we walk this day as seeing thee who art invisible. Hear our united supplication, that the gospel of the Lord Jesus may this day have free course and be glorified. May our Saviour's kingdom make daily accessions, and may these include all who are near and dear to us by the ties of earthly relationship, and all our absent friends. Perfect that which concerneth us, and accept of us graciously, and answer all our supplications exceeding abundantly, above all which we can ask or think, for Jesus Christ's sake, to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be everlasting glory, world without end. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXIX. 6. (*middle*.)

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XVIII. 25—40.

REMARKS.

Ver. 25—27. We have no strength to resist temptation when God withdraws his supporting grace. Sin will drag us down yet more and more, if not repented of and blotted out through the blood of Jesus. Poor Peter was entangled in its nets and could not escape. Again did temptation master him. Let us look to the warning, and keep near to Jesus. Ver. 28—32. Now, indeed, were the words of David fulfilled, 'Many bulls compassed the Saviour, strong bulls of Bashan beset him round; gaping upon him with their mouths, as a ravening and roaring lion.' Psalm xxii. 12, 13. Whether he be in the hands of him who betrayed him with a kiss, or in those of the ruffian mob, or at the tribunal of Annas, or Caiaphas, or Pilate, the same cry is heard; 'Blood, blood.' This was the voice of a violated law beholding the atoning victim; this was the cry of sin when finished. The soul that sinneth it shall die; and Jesus, as a spotless victim, stood as our surety. How vile is the human heart, that can put on an air of sanctity when perpetrating the most horrid sin. The Jews entered not the judgment-hall for fear of defilement, yet was their

very throat an open sepulchre. Spotless, however, was the Son of God, by the very confession of his enemies. Neither Annas, nor Caiaphas, nor Herod, nor Pilate, no, nor his blood-thirsty foes, the Jewish mob, could find aught in him worthy of death. How wondrously were all these restrained and directed, even when clamorous for their own will, to fulfil what the counsel and foreknowledge of God had predetermined to be done. Jesus must die on the cross, and therefore, eager for his death as were the Jews, they would not stone him. They delivered him up to the Gentiles, and consented to his death. Ver. 33—38. It was a groundless suspicion to imagine that our Lord's kingdom of righteousness and peace would interfere with the political arrangements of the Roman empire. These, indeed, it might modify and mould to the better, but it came not to overturn the throne of the Cæsars, which at last fell, not because Christianity overturned it, but by its monstrous load of guilt. The servants of the Lord Jesus obtain the victory by the sword of truth, not by weapons of steel. But Pilate, carnal and bewildered, would not wait to hear the proclamation of the truth from the lips of the King of the Jews. An expedient at the moment presented itself; and when, in answer to his own question, 'what is truth?' he might have heard from our Lord the words of life eternal, he hurried out of the judgment-hall once more to those whose favour he courted; and, though solemnly convinced of the innocence of Jesus, determined to suspend his life on the decision of his enemies. Now was seen the world's estimate of truth and holiness. The impious Pilate dared to set up the Lord of glory side by side with a murderer, fellow-candidates for the world's choice. And it was registered in the imperishable records of eternity, that they who had gone astray from God, preferred at once the murderer, with all his guilt and all his crimes, to the Lord of glory, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled. O let us be humbled to the dust, when we think that this also is our spirit till we are renewed.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we are poor, guilty transgressors, who have no way of access to thy throne of grace but the way of thine own appointment, through the Lord Jesus Christ. We bless and glorify thee for him, thine unspeakable gift. O may we be humbled in remembering the manifold sins of the past day, and our constant liability to fall under the power of temptation. Help us, we pray thee, to examine ourselves, lest in condemning others we overlook our own guilt. Let thy Holy Spirit lead us constantly to look to our own hearts. We would be low at the sight of them, and while humbled under a sense of our vileness, would glorify thee that the Lord Jesus became surety for poor sinners who had no atonement, and that he offered himself, without spot, in our room and stead. O Lord, we are verily guilty in that we do not feel more heartily, and deplore more sincerely, all the indignities which

were cast on thy dear Son, when he stood in the breach to turn away thy wrath from us. May the Lord Jesus establish his throne in our hearts, and look on us with that eye of compassion which melted the heart of Peter, hardened as it was by his manifold denials. Then shall we indeed be contrite, and hate our sins with a perfect hatred. O forbid that we should, with Pilate, refuse to hear the truth, or with the Jews, prefer Barabbas to our Lord. Help us to choose Jesus, and cleave to him, fearless of the reproach and scorn of a godless world. Follow with thy blessing the efforts of thy servants this day to spread thy truth. Establish in our hearts, and in our household, and in our land, and throughout the world, the holy kingdom of the Lord Jesus. O hasten its complete triumph, and bring the day speedily when the seed of Abraham shall look on him whom they despised for a murderer, and turn and weep bitterly for their sin. Watch over us this night, raise us up in the morning of a new day for thy service, and hear us graciously, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXIII.

SCRIPTURE—1 KINGS XVII.

REMARKS.

This is the first notice we have of this renowned prophet. His name and designation indicate that he was destined to be the reformer of Israel. At this time, in the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, Israel was in a deplorable state of degeneracy, and Elijah seemed as one left alone to testify for God, and for his cause. He is introduced to us here as denouncing upon Ahab and his guilty land, the judgments of heaven. Given over, as Ahab and his people had been, to idols, they had incurred Jehovah's wrath, and they were brought to know that, by the very elements of nature, he could speak to them in anger, and punish them. Elijah, warned of God to avoid the rage of Ahab, retired to a solitary, unfrequented spot, and was thrown into such circumstances as to be dependent entirely upon the immediate care and bounty of divine providence. But, trusting in God, he found himself not forsaken or destitute. He who had appointed the bounds of his habitation, made the creatures of his hand to minister to his necessities. A notable lesson this to the people of the Lord, to put their hope and confidence in him who hath promised to provide; and never to despair of God's helping hand, even when in circumstances the most adverse. They are thus, too, admonished, that their help may come, and often does come, from the most unlikely and unexpected quarters. When the means, which God, in the first instance, provided for Elijah had failed, he raised up one to help him in his time

of need, in the person of a poor widow woman. She had nothing of her own to spare; by reason of the famine which prevailed, she was reduced to the last extremity. Yet she was made to be the servant of the Lord, the almoner of heaven's bounty. And we are thus instructed, that God can bless and multiply the most humble means, when they are by faith received, and with thankfulness enjoyed, and with a cheerful heart shared with others. A crust of bread and a cup of cold water, the portion dealt out by providence to the poor believer, may be as much the means of happiness to him, and as much the subject of gratitude, on his part, to the Giver of all good, as are the ample riches of those in higher estate. And be it noticed, that there may be exemplified as true a liberality, and as kind a heart, in the sharing of his pittance with others, as in the splendid charities of those who have thousands of gold and silver at their disposal.

But while this poor woman exhibited such faith, and in her faith was so blessed and rewarded of God, she had sorrow and trouble mingled in the cup of her blessings. Sickness came upon her child, and death cut down the desire of her eyes. Showing us how that, when in the path of duty, and in the service of God, we may expect trial and affliction; visited upon us, not so much as the token of his displeasure as the trial of our confidence in him, and of our submission to him. But how comforting to our hearts is it to know, that if we do resign ourselves to his will, we shall either be supported under our trouble or delivered out of it. We may not have miracles wrought for our relief; but the Lord will let us know that he reigns, and will so interpose as to assure us that he has not forgotten to be gracious. May ours be the faith and the obedience of this woman, and may God be with us as the shield of our help, and our deliverer in the time of need.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art God, and besides thee there is none else. Thou createdest, thou sustainest, thou directest all things. None can control thy power, or question thy wisdom. Thou dost according to thine own will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. None can stay thy hand from working, or say unto thee, What doest thou? We rejoice to know that thou who art revealed to us as the greatest and wisest of beings, art at the same time made known to us, and experienced by us, as the kindest and the best. For which of us now before thee hast thou not loaded with thy benefits; giving us so many enjoyments and comforts which appertain unto this life; and giving us so many cheering hopes and promises of the life which is to come? Which of us has not been the peculiar object of thy fatherly kindness and care? Sleeping and waking, in prosperity and in adversity, in health and in sickness, thine eye has been upon us. Thou hast been our refuge and our strength, a very present help in every time of need. Thy

ways of dealing towards us are, indeed, in many instances, complicated and incomprehensible. We know not the mysterious operations of thy hand.—for here we see thee giving, there taking away,—here bowing down, there raising up,—here bringing down to the grave, there restoring back to life. But though we cannot fathom the deep purposes of thy will, we desire, with all humbleness of mind, to submit to the dispensations of thy adorable providence; assured that all things are wisely and well ordered, and that thou art making all things to work together for the good of them who love thee. O Lord, while we would desire to praise thee for thy temporal mercies, and to acquiesce in all the arrangements of thy providence, we would wish, if possible, a deeper gratitude to praise thee for the rich provision thou hast made for our spiritual wants. And we would humbly and heartily repose our confidence in the purposes and plans of thy grace for our salvation. We would look to him whom thou hast set forth in the gospel as the propitiation for sin. We would believe that there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved. We would receive him in all his holy offices, to instruct, and to save, and to sanctify; and we would rest in the freeness, the fullness, the all-sufficiency of his redemption. We pray thee to bestow upon us more and more of this confiding spirit; to fill us with the knowledge of thy will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; to enable us day by day to live by the faith, and hope, and obedience of the gospel, and to keep us by thy almighty power through faith unto salvation. We give thee thanks for the rest and repose of the night. We laid ourselves down and slept, and we have awaked, for thou hast sustained us. We would commend ourselves to thy guardian care through the day. Wherever we are, or in whatever engaged, may we have respect unto thee. Help us to discharge our duties faithfully and conscientiously. Save us from the temptations which are every where around us. Save us from the deceitfulness of our own sinful hearts. Guide us ever by thy counsel. Hold up our goings in thy paths, and let thy mercy ever be upon us, according as we hope in thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXII. 11—17.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XIX. 1—19.

REMARKS.

In these verses we notice, 1st, The base conduct of an unprincipled judge. This was an emergency well fitted to try the character of a man like Pilate,—a man without courage—without honesty of purpose. We see an individual brought before him, accused of crimes, inferring the punishment of death. He patiently examines into the case,—finds no charge substantiated,—declares him innocent, and recommends his release. And yet, in the face of his own acknowledged convictions, he gives up the prisoner to be scourged, mocked, and crucified!—all to please a barbarous mob, headed by a party who had leagued themselves to compass his destruction. There could be nothing more infamous than such conduct. It was in vain that Pilate washed his hands before the multitude, and declared himself innocent of the blood of this just person. In vain did he attempt to transfer the guilt from himself to the clamorous crowd. Had his principles been worth anything, he would have stood, at all hazards, between the innocent and his accusers, and saved himself and them from the guilt of the most brutal murder. It can never excuse crime to say, that we have been forced into the commission of it by the instigation of others. In such a case, what becomes of conscience and of duty? Such a plea would do away with moral responsibility.

2. We notice the determined hatred of Christ's enemies, and their anxiety to have him condemned, by their varying, from time to time, the ground of their accusations against him. They had at first accused him of aspiring to be king of the Jews, and consequently of treason against the reigning sovereign. But failing to establish their charge on this point, they next demanded his condemnation on the score of blasphemy, because of his pretending, as they said, to be the Son of God, and quoted their law on the subject (Deut. xviii. 20.) In regard to this charge, too, they failed to satisfy Pilate of his guilt. Indeed the preferring that accusation injured their cause, for it led him to suspect that he who stood before him was a person of no ordinary quality. The Jews, therefore, bent upon the one object of his ruin, reiterated their charge of his aiming at sovereign power, and coupled it, in this instance, with a threat as to Pilate's own safety with Cesar. How unscrupulous are the wicked, as to the means employed, when their heart is set in them for evil! Provided Jesus was given up to their fury, the Jews cared not upon what pretext.

3. We notice the circumstances of contumely and cruelty connected with Christ's crucifixion. In ordinary cases, when a malefactor is in the hands of justice, and is about to suffer for his crimes, there is a feeling of compassion for him on the part of the assembled crowd, and a desire to lessen rather than to increase his sufferings. But how different here! All parties seem to have tasked their ingenuity to add insult and cruelty to the sufferings of the meek and innocent Jesus. Pilate, who could find no fault in

him, and was willing to let him go, basely gave his back to the smiters. The soldiers, hearing his pretensions to be a king, invest him with the mock ensign of royalty, and insolently and rudely offer him their sham obeisance. The chief priests and officers, seeing him led forth so arrayed, the object of insult and scorn, as if ashamed of having such a king, uttered their execrations against him, and raise their fiercer cry, 'Crucify him, crucify him!' The multitude, excited to fury, hurry him to the judgment-seat, that there, from the mouth of their imbecile judge, they might receive the legal sanction of putting him to death. No time is lost: he is taken away, bearing his cross, to Golgotha, where he is nailed to the accursed tree,—made a spectacle to men and angels; and to add, if possible, to his ignominy, is hanged between two thieves, as if the most criminal of the three.

The review of such atrocious wickedness is fitted to arouse our generous indignation. We are constrained to ask, why one so holy, so harmless, and so approved of by heaven, should have been exposed to such cruel treatment. We should be ready to call in question the justice of an over-ruling providence, which permitted such things to take place, were we not assuredly made to know, that it behoved him thus to have suffered. Deeply criminal as were his murderers, (and nothing can ever extenuate their guilt,) they were yet fulfilling the mysterious plans of heaven. He who was so suffering under their hands, was suffering, the just for the unjust,—was paying the ransom price of our redemption,—was bearing our sins in his own body on the tree. It is the knowledge of this that not only reconciles us to the sufferings and the death of Christ, but fills us with admiration, love and praise. We see the great love wherewith God hath loved us, in not sparing his own Son, but in delivering him up for us all.

PRAYER.

Our Father, which art in heaven, we come this evening to thy throne of grace. We would bow down before thee, and give to thee the homage which is due from creatures to their Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. We are conscious that our praises and our prayers are altogether unworthy of thy regard. But we would worship thee through the one Mediator betwixt thee and us, and for Christ's sake we would plead for favour and acceptance. Adored be thy name, O God, for thine unspeakable gift, Jesus Christ, and for all the riches of thy grace bestowed upon us through him. We ascribe it to thy great and undeserved love to us sinners, that when we had ruined ourselves, when we were under thy curse, and were unable to deliver our own souls, thou didst interpose on our behalf. Thou didst say, Save from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom. We rejoice to know that the ransom paid was all-sufficient, that the sacrifice offered was all-efficacious for us and for our salvation. Lord, help us ever to bear in mind the marvel-

lous price which our redemption cost, in the humiliation, and sufferings, and death of thy Son from heaven. When we read, as we have this night been reading, how he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, how he endured the cross and despised the shame, O may we feel our souls constrained by a sense of his love. May we feel what a debt of gratitude we owe to him for his great grace to us. To this once crucified, but now exalted Redeemer, we desire to look by faith. O that, believing on him, we may have life through his name, and out of his fullness receive the wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, of which we all stand in need. Stablish, strengthen, settle us in his faith. Help us to trust in him as our Saviour, to learn of him as our teacher, to follow him as our guide, to copy after him as our example, to rejoice in him as our all in all. We have to thank thee for thy goodness to us throughout this day. Thou hast brought us in health and safety to its close. Take us under thy good care during the night. Shepherd of Israel! watch over us. Suffer no plague to come near our dwelling. If it please thee to spare us to see the morning light, may we still be with thee, the partakers of thy goodness and mercy, and strengthened and prepared for doing and bearing thy will. All we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XVI. 1—6.

SCRIPTURE—I KINGS XVIII.

REMARKS.

During Elijah's concealment at Cherith and Zarephath, God's judgments had been experienced in all their severity throughout that guilty land. The famine at Samaria (the capital of the ten tribes) must have been very great, when the king himself found it necessary to go in quest of pasturage for his cattle. Obadiah, whom he associated with him in this search, was at the head of his household, a faithful and tried servant, and to whose praise it is mentioned here that, though in the midst of idolatry and wickedness, he had maintained his integrity, and was a pious, God-fearing man. It is no uncommon thing for the servants of the Lord to be placed in such circumstances of peril and temptation, and this, no doubt, both for the trial of their principles and for the maintaining and promoting his cause. This was the case here. When it seemed to be the queen's purpose to extirpate the worship of the true God, by putting to death his prophets, and by encouraging and supporting the prophets of the false gods, Obadiah found the means of keeping alive a hundred of these persecuted men, and so saved a seed to show forth God's praise to the adulterous generation around.

Yet, while Obadiah was devoted to the Lord's cause, he was not without the fear of man, which bringeth a snare. It was not acting up to the principles he had hitherto maintained, to let the dread of Ahab's wrath frighten him from doing his duty. He had, in this instance, forgotten that in serving God we need not fear what man can do. Ver. 17—21. Ahab had not been humbled by the judgments of heaven. The foolish man was more inclined to see human than divine agency in his calamities. He would rather consider Elijah as the troubler of Israel, than acknowledge the scourge as sent from God, who alone could prolong it or withdraw it. The prophet sought to set him right in this matter. The true cause of his troubles was his having incurred the wrath of the Most High, which all will sooner or later experience who desert his service, and give their hearts and their homage away to idols. And yet Baalim could not help him. These gods had no right to such honours as he had been giving them. They were false gods, and their pretensions might be easily exposed. Ver. 21—25. We need never be afraid to stand up for God and for his cause. He has never left himself without a witness. He has made the evidence of his being and perfections, and the necessity of his worship so palpable, that we may rest assured that the truth, so far from being injured, will be confirmed by every trial. Seeing that this is the case, it must be the duty of all to acquaint themselves with the truth, to examine and search for themselves, and then to act with decision in the maintenance of it. We shall find that the Lord is God, and none else but he. Then let us make him our hope and our portion; and abiding by our conviction, let us not be giving ourselves up to gods many and to lords many. Let us admire and endeavour to imitate the conduct of the intrepid prophet who, though opposed by thousands, and standing single and alone, was yet resolute in his defence of God and of his truth. Ver. 26—29. How humbling the fooleries of idolatry! How thankful ought we to be that our eyes have been turned away from such lying vanities, and that we have had revealed to us the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. Ver. 30—39. The inglorious silence of the idol-god, when so long and fervently appealed to, is a striking contrast to the prompt, decisive response of Jehovah, Israel's God. We are warranted from this to believe that he who so honoured Elijah, when pleading his cause, will not desert his people when they are at any time witnessing for him in the midst of the infidel and profane. They may be deserted by the world, but he will interfere for them and vindicate them. He will attend to their cry. 'He will not turn away their prayer, nor his mercy from them.' Ver. 40. The punishment of these presumptuous prophets, according to the divine law, (Deut. xiii. 1—5.) shows that God will not away with those who alienate his honours. He is a jealous God: vengeance is his, and he will repay. Sooner or later will the wicked and ungodly assuredly find that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. They will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power.

PRAYER.

We desire, O Lord, with all humility to draw near unto thee, and to worship thee who art the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only living and true God. The gods of the heathen are dumb idols, the work of men's hands; utterly unworthy are they of the regard of thy rational creatures, to whom thou hast never left thyself without a witness; seeing that thy eternal power and Godhead are manifested in the works and operations of thy hands. We bless thee for the clearer revelation thou hast given us of thyself in thy Son from heaven, declared to be the brightness of thy glory, the express image of thy person. Now indeed we know whom we worship and serve, the great God of heaven and of earth, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, a heavenly Father reconciled to us through him. But, Lord, though we know thee, who thou art, and what thou hast done and art doing for us, we confess that we have not walked as the children of light and of privilege. How must we confess that in the enjoyment of thy gifts we have forgotten thee the giver; that we have been more disposed to take the credit of it all to ourselves, or to refer it to creature help and creature power, rather than give the glory and the praise to thee, by whose permission alone we live, by whose grace it is we are what we are. And not only, O God, have we proved ungrateful to thee; we have rejected thy authority, we have resisted thy will, we have violated thy laws, we have not walked in thy statutes, nor kept thy judgments. We have done despite to the Spirit of thy grace. When in thy mercy thou hast called we have not obeyed. When thou hast warned us we have not heeded thee. When thou hast remonstrated and threatened we have been unmoved. O deal not with us according to our deservings. Remember us in mercy. Look not upon us as we are in ourselves. Look upon us in the face of thine Anointed. Extend to us, through him, the pardon of all our sins; and give us, through his justifying righteousness, admittance into thy presence and the enjoyment of thy favour. Grant us grace, O God, to hate and to crucify our sins, which we now confess, and for which we implore thy forgiveness. Too long have we followed the devices of our own sinful hearts; we desire henceforth to run in the way of thy commandments. We would devote ourselves unreservedly to thy service. We would make thy will our will, and seek to regulate our thoughts, and our words, and our actions, by the principles of thy pure and holy word. Lord, help us; deny us not thy grace; withhold not from us thy

Holy Spirit; and lead thou us in the way everlasting. We are, by thy merciful providence, brought to the light of another day. We give thee thanks for the continued health, and peace, and comforts we are permitted to enjoy. We would go forward to the business and the trials of life, trusting in thee. Help us to be redeeming the time, and to be walking before thee in circumspection and holy fear, and to be living mindful of death, and judgment, and eternity. Hear, O Lord, these our humble prayers, and when thou hearest forgive, accept, and bless us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLIV. 3—6.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XIX. 20—42.

REMARKS.

Ver. 19—23. It was customary in those times to fix an inscription over the criminal, bearing his name and the cause for which he suffered. This was not forgotten amid the other indignities of Christ's crucifixion. But to make his exposure, if possible, more notorious, Pilate caused it to be written in the three languages which were then most generally understood, that so the strangers who were attending the passover from distant parts, might, in their own tongue, read of Christ, the despised, rejected, crucified king of the Jews. This inscription, which was likely intended to be in mockery both of him and them, gave offence to the Jews. It bore that he was their king, and implied as much as if they had crucified their Messiah. They would have him to change it, but sufficiently annoyed by them already, in having been forced to condemn an innocent person, he refused; and thus unconsciously bore a striking testimony to a most important truth, 'that the very man whom he had crucified as a malefactor did not merely say, that he was the king of the Jews, the true Messiah, but that he really was so.' Ver. 23—25. The clothes of the criminal were the perquisite of those who performed the part of executioners in this horrid business. The four soldiers, therefore, who had completed the work of crucifixion, proceeded to claim their recompense, and to part among them the raiment of Christ. They were little aware that in agreeing to cast lots for his garments, which it would have spoiled to have divided, they were just fulfilling one of the many prophecies respecting him, (Psal. xxii. 18.) The garment was curious and valuable—the work, it is believed, of either his mother or of the pious women who ministered with him.

Ver. 25—27. What an hour must this have been for his mother, who was standing by, to see the son of her love and of her hope, and it might be of her pride, now suffering the cruel agonies of the cross. We cannot think but that even then she had not relinquished the belief that he was the Messiah, the

king of Israel. There was with her no frantic grief. She and her friends seemed to have been waiting resignedly and calmly the fulfilment of Heaven's purposes in regard to him. And how beautifully is Christ's character, as an affectionate son, brought out on this occasion. Can we receive a more striking lesson of filial duty than is here addressed to us from the cross? Let them who neglect and honour not their parents, look to Christ's example and learn of him. Ver. 27—31. In connection with every part of our Saviour's history, there were many prophecies which had been one and all fulfilled. There was yet one to be accomplished ere he died, and we may see that in this, as in every other, there was no forced fulfilment. The fatigue he had undergone, and the agony now of the cross, induced, doubtless, the most excruciating thirst; and the fact was now the fulfilment of the prophecy, 'In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.' This done, he said, 'It is finished.' He knew that what the prophets foretold of him was accomplished in his person; in his life, and sufferings, and death; that the justice of God was now satisfied; that the great work of redemption for which he had come into the world was completed; that his own sufferings were over; that the rage and cruelty of his enemies could do no more. Knowing all this, he bowed his head, in token of submission to his Father's will, and gave up the ghost.

Ver. 31—38. It was a strange preparation for the passover this crucifixion of Christ. And yet though the Jews had no compunction on that score, they would not allow the solemnities that were before them to be interfered with by any care they might have of the bodies that were crucified. It was contrary to their law, (Deut. xxi. 23.) Ye hypocrites! Ye scrupled not to put to torture and to death the innocent Jesus; ye set at nought the claims of justice and of truth, and yet ye pretend to make a conscience of the outward matters of the law! In their anxiety, however, to have the bodies disposed of, they were instrumental at once in proving the veritable death of Christ, which might have been disputed, by the soldiers piercing his side, and there coming forth blood and water, the most decisive sign of actual death; and in accomplishing certain prophecies in regard to Christ at this time, that a bone of him should not be broken, and that they should look on him whom they had pierced.

PRAYER.

O God, let thy blessing follow the reading of thy holy word. Give us to know, and to appreciate more and more, the love wherewith Christ has loved us sinners. We see it to have been a love stronger than death, a love which many waters could not quench. We see that not all the enmity of men and devils, not all the agonies of crucifixion, not all the hidings of thy face, could divert him from his purpose of finishing the work for which he had come into the world. Thanks be to thee, O holy Jesus! who despisedst nor abhorredst our misery; who didst put thyself in our room and stead, to be wounded

for our transgressions, to be bruised for our iniquities, and that we through thy stripes might be healed. We praise thee that thou didst finish transgression, and make an end of sin; that thou didst make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness. We look to thee dying on the cross of Calvary, and we see a sacrifice made there, worthy of heaven to accept. We look to thy grave, and seeing thee lying there, we mourn over the doom and the curse of sin. We look to thy resurrection, and we rejoice in the conquest of death, and in the hopes of glory, honour, and immortality, in the everlasting habitations. We look up to the heavens, where thou art an exalted Prince and Saviour, and we stay ourselves on thee, our unwearied advocate and friend. God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! make all grace abound to us through him. O let not Christ have come and suffered and died in vain for us; let him see in us of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Give us to be washed, and justified, and sanctified, in his name, and by the Spirit of thee our God. May we be his now, and his for ever; numbered now among his people, and sealed to the day of final redemption. Extend the limits of the Redeemer's kingdom. Let the joyful sound of his gospel be heard in every land, and by many a heart may it be felt to be the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation. Especially in this, our native country, in every neighbourhood, and in every family, may the pure and undefiled religion of Christ prosper and prevail. Everywhere may the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, and may truth and righteousness be established amongst us. Prosper the labours of those who minister among us in holy things; may they not spend their strength for nought, and may we be a willing people in the day of thy power. We commend to thee our kindred and friends; encompass them with thy favour, as with a shield, and bless them with the joys of thy salvation. Look in mercy on the sick, the sorrowful, and the dying; accommodate the supplies of thy providence, and grace, and Spirit, to their varied necessities. May they know thee and rest in thee as their God and portion. Thou hast brought us in safety to the close of another day, and of another week, and much cause have we to praise thee for thy continuing goodness. Solemnize our minds in the prospect of the approaching sabbath. If it please thee to spare us to see it, may we enjoy it as a day of rest, and of spiritual refreshment. May we be enabled to engage in its duties in a spiritual frame of mind,

and to serve thee aright, with acceptableness and holy fear. All we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK. SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXXII.

REMARKS.

Solomon had just been invested with the regal dignity, the joyful tribes of Israel shouting on every side, 'God save the king.' While the scene was highly interesting to all, there was one whose feelings were peculiarly moved on the occasion. David was yet alive, and at his express command Solomon had been anointed, and enthroned, and associated with himself in the government. It was not to be thought that the solemnity could have passed without exciting the affection of the parent, and the holy zeal of the man of God. In the psalm before us we have David's blessing on his youthful successor. The first verse is in the language of prayer. He entreats grace for Solomon, (who is spoken of both as the king, and as the king's son)—that he may rule according to the divine law, and be a just and virtuous monarch. As he prays, the prophetic fire descends upon him, the visions of God rise before his eyes, he beholds in Solomon a typical Messiah, and in his prosperous career, his far-reaching empire, and his long and illustrious reign, the figures of the greatness and glory of him who hath many crowns on his head, and on whose vesture and thigh is inscribed the name of King of kings, and Lord of lords!

Let us attend to the prophetic description of that kingdom which rises to the psalmist's view. The great Prince, with whom Solomon is here, according to prophetic usage, identified, shall reign in righteousness; when the government is laid upon his shoulders, justice and judgment shall be the habitation of his throne. He will walk by the precepts of law, he will vindicate and maintain every principle of equity. The sentences of his tribunals, whether they be sentences of acquittal or of condemnation, shall proceed on proper and irrefragable grounds. No claim of law, no interest of holiness, will he ever disregard. He shall, moreover, be the friend and deliverer of the poor. He will see to it, that none shall trample on their rights. He will look upon him whom there is none to help, and his own arm shall bring salvation. The souls of the needy he will redeem. He will secure the best of benefits for the objects of his compassion. He will consult for the welfare of their souls. On the enemies and oppressors of their souls he will take vengeance, and he will establish them in spiritual security. His government shall be signified by the promptitude, and the vigour, and the success, of its operations. The uniform issue of his conflicts with antagonist powers shall be, that 'his enemies shall lick the dust.' And his sway over his

subjects shall be most beneficent in its nature. 'He shall come down like the rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth.' The spirit of grace shall be shed upon the people abundantly. And the people shall be refreshed, and gladdened, and strengthened thereby. They shall be made to run in the way of the divine commandments.

His administration will lead to the happiest result. Because he is the king of righteousness, he shall be the king of peace. There can be no solid peace that is not founded on righteousness. Here there shall be abundance of peace. The subjects of his kingdom shall have peace with God, peace in their own consciences, peace among themselves.

The prosperity and blessedness that shall attend his rule, and the universality of his glorious dominion, are declared. May God hasten the complete fulfilment!

PRAYER.

Lord, let thy kingdom come! Take unto thee thy power, O God of Zion! Reign over us. Make us willing and glad to abide under thy benignant sway. Let the wondrous discoveries of thy gospel—its revelations of thy everlasting love, of the riches of redeeming grace, and of the efficacy of the blood of the cross, subdue our souls, and dispose us to yield a grateful obedience to thy law. We acknowledge that other lords besides thee have had dominion over us. We owed thee an affection and an obedience which we did not pay. Thou didst speak, thou didst command, thou didst threaten, thou didst invite, thou didst entreat; but we would not hearken unto thy voice. All the day long didst thou stretch out thy hands to us; but we were a gainsaying and a rebellious people. We wonder, O Lord, at the goodness which surrounds us, and at the long-suffering of which we are the monuments. But thy ways are not as our ways; neither are thy thoughts like our thoughts. Wherefore, we beseech thee, to pardon our iniquity, and to blot out our sin. And grant thou that we may not rebel any more. Take away our hearts of unbelief and pride, and give us hearts that are broken and contrite. Send thy Spirit to convince us of our past disaffection, and to make us ashamed on account of it. May he shed abroad within us the love of thy service, and teach us to prize the blessings of thy government, and the privileges of the children of thy kingdom. And, in repairing this day to thy sanctuary, may He, the Comforter, excite us to an alacrity, and fill us with a joy, arising from true and loyal dispositions to thee, as our King and our God. May it this day be our happiness to receive of the bounty, to partake of the royal munificence of the church's glorious Head. O let us taste and see that the Lord is gracious.

Speedily let thy kingdom everywhere come. We pray that thou wouldst render effectual for its advancement, the proclamation of the gospel tidings by thy servants on this thy day. Bless the labours of those who seek to build the walls of Zion, and to enlarge the Christian territory. Come down upon the scene of Christian toil in this lower world, as rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth. We rejoice, O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the foretold felicities that are to flow from the reign of thy Son. Blessed be thy name that already they are begun to be experienced, and that thy children are no strangers to peace, even to the peace of reconciliation with thee, by the righteousness of our Lord. We thank thee, that it has been given to any, to feel the converting, and sanctifying, and consoling influences of the Holy Ghost, and that the first drops are falling of that heavenly shower which thou hast promised shall descend in a plenteous rain even from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. We give thee praise, that the oppressor of souls has already felt the superior might of the Captain of our salvation, and that the sure prospect is before us of the utter and final overthrow of the kingdom of satan. Enable us more and more to rest on thy promises, and to realize the excellence of spiritual blessings. May we be among the number of those who are looking for and hasting unto the day of God, and longing after the new heavens, and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Hear our prayer, O God, for the sake of Jesus thy Son. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRaise—PSALM LXXIII. 23.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXXIII.

REMARKS.

Whether we survey the course of God's general providence, or his wonderful works in the kingdom of grace, we may say with the psalmist, 'truly he is good to Israel!' In the former case, however, his special favour for his people is not at first sight so apparent. Sometimes the believer is thrown into considerable perplexity, and his heart begins to fail him, at the prosperous state of the ungodly, and the manifold troubles of the generation of the righteous. The testimony of sense, if it does not go so far as to favour the idea that the spirit of evil has been left to the uncontrolled government of the world, and permitted to determine the circumstances of its inhabitants at his pleasure, does, at all events, occasionally seem to convey the alarming intimation that the

moral Governor is regardless of moral distinctions, and that the praiseworthy sacrifices and labours of a life of piety are unnoticed by him on the one hand, and the pride and profligacy of a godless career on the other. And then the question occurs,—Is our accustomed belief a vain one, that felicity is the attendant of holiness, and misery of vice? Do we err in supposing that it shall be well with us if we serve God, and ill with us if we walk contrary to his ways? Are there no compensating advantages for that self-denial which a godly life demands? and may Mammon be worshipped, fleshly lusts gratified, and all unrighteousness practised, without displeasing him whose law is thereby trodden under foot, and whose glory is turned into shame?

If we forget God's word, if we shut the book of revelation, we shall speedily lose ourselves in the labyrinth of providence. For a moment the psalmist did not avail himself of the assistance of that indispensable guide, and therefore it happened that 'his steps had well nigh slipped, and his feet were almost gone.' From what he saw in the world around him, he began to wonder if it was really a matter of no consequence whether he mortified the deeds of the body or not. The distribution of earthly good, perplexed and confounded him. So far as his observation extended, the most worthy were the least favoured. Sorrow and trouble seemed the special portion of the righteous; while the sun of prosperity was shining on the habitations of wickedness. Musing on what he observed, he was much discouraged. Unassisted reason was completely at fault. He knew not how to vindicate the character of God. He began to feel as though the distinction between good and evil were disappearing, and heaven were withdrawing its encouragements to a life of devotedness to God. Thus his feet 'were almost gone.' Just in time he betook himself to the light of revealed truth. He entered God's sanctuary, consulted its records, and learned the future history of the ungodly. On the theatre of sense he had seen them 'great in power,' spreading 'like a green bay tree;' and now on the theatre of faith, he saw them 'consumed with terrors,' and brought in a moment to desolation! Here the curtain was withdrawn from the realms of eternity, and he beheld on high the abodes of the righteous in Immanuel's land; and the receptacles of the impenitent, with the deathless worm, and the unquenchable fire, beneath! Then understood he their end.

It remains therefore an unshaken truth, that 'God is good to Israel.' He is good to Israel, at the very time when he is afflicting him.

The enlightened soul therefore holds fast the beginning of its confidence stedfast unto the end.

PRAYER.

O Lord, truly thou art good to Israel. Lord! thou art the God that doeth wonders. Thou hast built up thy mercy for ever! Thou sentest not thy Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Thy commission did not bid him execute vengeance, but appointed him to accomplish salvation. Thou

didst subject him for our sakes to poverty, sorrow, and shame. It pleased thee to bruise him, and to put him to grief. On him thou didst lay the iniquity of us all. It was thy will, that he, the just, should die for us, the unjust, in order to bring us unto God. We thank thee for the promise of the out-pouring of the Spirit. We rejoice in the fulfilment of that promise. Blessed be thy name that souls are quickened; that captives of satan are made to know the joyful sound, and that some of those who sit in darkness, are made to see the great light of the gospel. We adore, O Lord, that wonderful work of thy Spirit, whereby they who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, are made fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and they who were not a people, are become the people of God. O make us partakers in the privileges of thy true Israel! We are dark: do thou enlighten us. We are powerless: do thou strengthen us with might by thy Spirit in the inner man. We are foolish: make us wise unto salvation. We are prone to unbelief: O make the vital grace of faith to abound in us. We are carnal, proud, unholy: make us spiritual, humble, contrite—haters of sin, lovers of righteousness, and followers of that holiness without which none shall see the Lord. We pray, O Lord, that we may be enabled to glorify thee in every circumstance of our life, and under every dispensation of thy providence. When affliction comes, may we be prepared to meet it. Let no troubles that ever befall us, create in our minds a doubt of thy goodness. May we be of that privileged number, to whom all things work together for good; and whom neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword; neither death, nor life, things present, nor things to come; neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord! Forgive, O our God, the imperfection and sin with which our religious services this day are chargeable. Follow, with an effectual blessing, the solemn exercises in which we have been engaged. Let it not be in vain that thy servants have this day confronted and assailed the adversary with the sword of the Spirit. Deep and deadly may the injury prove that has this day been inflicted on the kingdom of satan! Hasten the downfall of Babylon, the destruction of Antichrist! Let the eastern deceiver, deceive men no more! May the worship of idols, and of gods that are no gods, speedily

every where cease! O send help from above, out of thy sanctuary, to the soldiers of the cross. May the Captain of the Lord's host go forth before them, conquering and to conquer! We pray for our country. Turn the hearts of the people, old and young, high and low, rich and poor, to thyself. May our public sins be forgiven by thee, and forsaken by us; and may our nation be exalted in righteousness. Bless our queen. Give her to reign long and prosperously over us. Endow her with thy saving grace; and may she adorn her eminent station, by exhibiting in it all the excellencies of the Christian character. We now commit ourselves to thee, O thou that keepest Israel! Be gracious unto us. Let our slumbers this night be peaceful and refreshing! and in the morning may we awake to celebrate thy praises, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLV. 17.

SCRIPTURE—1 KINGS XVIII.

REMARKS.

The land of Israel was groaning under the terrible effects of a drought, which had lasted for years. The prayer of Elijah, prompted by the spirit of inspiration, had brought that judgment upon a Baal-worshipping people, and now the time had come when it was the will of him, who 'keeps not his anger for ever,' that the judgment should be removed.

Ver. 1—16. There may be noticed—1. Elijah's obedience to the divine command. No man was so obnoxious to Ahab as he. On him Ahab laid the blame of his own and his subjects' sufferings. And Ahab was a person who had neither religious principles nor honourable feeling, to restrain him from the most despotic and violent proceedings. Yet Elijah obeyed. We do not find that he hesitated. We do find that he gave instant compliance, and straightway sought the perilous interview. His obedience illustrates his faith. He relied upon God. He believed in him who never forsakes his servants. He was strong in the Lord. 2. Obadiah's piety. It is a remarkable thing when piety is found in a dissolute court. It does not often occur. God had a design in it, viz., to aid and protect his prophets. 3. The wicked man's involuntary homage to godliness. The very toleration that Obadiah enjoyed in such a place as the house of Ahab is an example of this. 4. The worldly man's care. The manifest tokens of divine displeasure gave Ahab no concern. These never moved him; but the prospect of 'losing all the beasts' did. That awoke him from his dream of pleasure, and roused him to unwonted personal efforts.

Ver. 17—20. In these verses two points claim attention. 1. Ministerial faithfulness. 2. Ministerial authority.

Ver. 21—40. Among a variety of lessons which may be drawn from this remarkable narrative, we select three. 1. The importance of being decided in matters of religion. 2. The necessity of being on the right side. Sincerity is no substitute for orthodoxy. 3. How credulous and irrational unconverted men are in matters of a spiritual nature! The absurd and preposterous character of the religion of Baal, is very strikingly exhibited in the scene here described; but it is evident that its doctrines and rites were not too extravagant to be generally submitted to, or to be regarded with favour by many of the enlightened men of Israel. In like manner, our own time, and our own land, show, that high intellectual powers, great intelligence, and knowledge of scripture, are not sufficient to secure their possessor against the adoption of the monstrous dogmas of the Roman Antichrist. Even in countries highly educated and civilized, the grace of God is the only sure specific against the prevalence of the grossest forms of error. The lights of science, or of unsanctified religious acquirement, will never in any degree lessen the gloom of that darkness which arises from the want of the illumination of the Spirit. Only but give an unconverted man a motive sufficiently strong, and which shall be congenial to his corrupt nature, and there is no absurdity of a religious kind that will not go down with him.

Ver. 41—46. The lessons here are two. 1. The power of prayer. 2. The qualities of effectual prayer. First, It is the prayer of faith. Secondly, It is fervent prayer. Elijah cast himself upon the earth, and put his face between his knees. Thirdly, It is persevering prayer. Six times the servant of the prophet reported that his master's supplications were unattended by any visible effect. But Elijah, like Jacob, desisted not till God heard and answered him.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art God alone. Thou art the Creator of all, the preserver of all, the Lord of all. From all other gods we will turn away, because they are no gods. We will worship the Lord our God, and him only will we serve. O let us have grace to keep thy commandments! Thou hast commanded us to believe on thy Son. Enable us to obey: may we joyfully surrender to him our hearts, and humbly and gratefully rely on his righteousness. Thou hast commanded us to desist from the vain attempts to serve two masters. Give us, therefore, fortitude to choose; and give us wisdom to choose aright. Thou hast commanded us to yield our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto thee, which is our reasonable service. May we, therefore, yield our members as the instruments of righteousness unto God. Thou hast said, Be ye holy, for I am holy. O then, furnish us with the principles and motives from which holiness shall flow: give us thy sanctifying grace. We remember it is written,

that without Christ we can do nothing. Therefore, O Lord, we cry unto thee to enable us to abide in Christ; so that, we being in him, he may be in us, and our fruit may abound to thy praise. From the person and the character, the life and the death, of Jesus, may we have faith to draw such strength and nourishment, that our fruit shall abound more and more. Send down upon us the dews of thy divine influences; and give us the Holy Ghost. We pray for a speedy end to idol-worship every where. How long, O Lord, shall darkness so extensively prevail, and vast multitudes of the children of men remain in the region of the shadow of death! When wilt thou cause the reign of superstition to cease, and for ever ruin the credit of all false gods! Have mercy, we beseech thee, upon the millions that are perishing in our own and other lands. We ask thee not for miracles, such as thou wroughtest of old by thy servant Elijah; but we ask thee for things still more highly to be prized,—even, O our God, the effectual influences of thy grace. Grant that of these there may be a far more copious dispensation than has hitherto been enjoyed. Where already the gospel is preached, let quickening power continually accompany it. May Christians in name, become Christians indeed. And instead of temporary impressions on the understanding, may the truth, as it is in Jesus, make saving impressions on the heart. Where, as yet, the joyful sound has not been heard, O soon let thy heralds make their appearance, and proclaim the glad tidings to all. And go thou with them, O Lord. When they speak to the deaf, do thou cause the deaf to hear. When they cry amid the valley of the dead, do thou cause the dead men to live. Let not thy word and thy Spirit be separated. Where the word is preached there may the Spirit operate. Let the word be borne over all the earth; over all the earth let the Spirit pursue his renewing and sanctifying processes, and perform his enlightening, and comforting, and saving work. Take thou possession of every land, and of every heart, for thyself; that no land and no heart may remain to be possessed by idols. We seek thy protection and aid, O our Father, in all that is before us. Let not our intercourse with the world make us forgetful of thee. In attending to our secular affairs, may our conduct be guided by the directions of thy law, and may we have an eye to thy glory. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it. And now, O Lord, forgive us our sins, and hear

thou our morning supplications, for Christ's sake.
Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LXI.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XX.

REMARKS.

The leading doctrine of this chapter is the resurrection of Christ. To the great truth that our Lord rose from the dead, we cannot attach too much importance. What hope of deliverance from death could the members have ventured to entertain, if the Head had sunk beneath that tyrant's power? It was necessary, indeed, that our Lord should go down to the grave; but it was necessary, also, that he should not remain there. No victory over the grave could there ever have been to his people, unless he himself had been victorious over it. By his resurrection it was shown that he had the keys of death,—a most welcome discovery to them who, through fear of death, were subject to bondage. When our Lord died, much was done for the accomplishment of his people's salvation. But all was not done. Sin was stoned for; but the consequent intercession was not made. The blood of the sacrifice had not been carried within the veil. Moreover, the redemption that had been bought required to be applied. There were spiritual gifts to be bestowed. When our Lord exclaimed on the cross, 'It is finished,' he announced a great triumph over Satan his adversary: but it was necessary that he should follow up his advantage, and take measures to ensure that the blow which had been struck should prove fatal to the power of the devil. Hence the importance of the doctrine of the resurrection. Evidence, too, was thereby afforded that, in his conflict with the serpent, the seed of the woman had suffered no other injury than the bruising of his heel.

The death of Christ was, at the time, a most disheartening event to his followers. It was the smiting of the Shepherd, and had been succeeded by the scattering of the sheep. The resurrection of Christ was, on the other hand, a most joyful event; it was the Shepherd uprising mighty as ever, and was succeeded by the gathering of the flock. The chapter before us gives a narrative of part of the Shepherd's proceedings in re-assembling his scattered sheep.

In the cases of many of the apostles we see the good Shepherd's tender care of his sheep. The case of Thomas is especially remarkable. In him we have a painful example of the scattering of the sheep. Thomas was not present at the first visit of Jesus. He was the only absentee. Perhaps he had formed, and had already begun to execute, the resolution of dismissing his crucified Master entirely from his thoughts, and it may be, that he intended by degrees to withdraw himself from his brethren in the apostleship. Israel's Shepherd observed him, and determined to recall him to his duty, and to re-establish him in the faith. Thomas was most obstinate and unreasonable in his unbelief.

Satan had manifestly prevailed against him. Jesus had said of the members of his flock, 'they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.' He proved it now. A love less strong than his would have abandoned an unbeliever like Thomas. An arm less powerful would not have been able to save him out of the mouth of the lion. But he was every way more than equal to this trying occasion. He revisited the disciples when Thomas was present, and granted, with unparalleled forbearance and grace, his daring demand. 'Reach hither thy finger,' said he, 'and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.' A power before which no unbelief could stand, accompanied these words. Thomas, casting from him all doubt, recognised the power that was upon him as superhuman and divine, and exclaimed with fervour and assurance, 'My Lord and my God!'

We are strikingly taught in this chapter the importance of lively spiritual affections. Mary Magdalene had the advantage of all the apostles, in respect of privilege and favour at the time of the resurrection. Whence came the distinction she received? It was certainly not to be attributed to any superiority on her part in spiritual knowledge, or in more intellectual attainment of a religious nature. No. But it obviously arose from the warmth of her heart—from the eminent intensity of her love. Therein her excellence lay. Where there is much love to the Saviour, there will be peculiar manifestations of him. 'He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou hast done marvellous things: thy right hand and thy holy arm have gotten thee the victory. Thou didst not, O our Father, leave the soul of thy Messiah in hell, neither didst thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Vain was all the power of death,—impotent all the rage of Satan; they could not keep our Lord a prisoner in the tomb. We thank thee for that gospel which calls upon us to believe and trust in a Saviour who once was dead,—dead for sin; and who, therefore, expiated its guilt, satisfied the law, and magnified thy justice at the cost of his inestimable blood. And we also thank thee that the Saviour whom the gospel presents to us is not dead now; that, though he was truly dead, he is now as truly alive; that he lives a Priest to intercede for us, a Prophet to teach us, a King to sway the sceptre of a benign and happy reign over us. Obtaining reconciliation to thee by the death of thy Son, O grant that we may be completely and finally saved by his life. We remember that he said unto his disciples, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' We covet for ourselves the fulfilment of this gracious promise. May we be the living people of a liv-

ing Saviour. O that our souls may live before thee. Grant, O Lord, that through the power of Christ's Spirit, we may not be among the number of them whom spiritual death retains in the grave of trespasses and sins. Quicken and revive us, we beseech thee. May we have life by reason of Christ living in us. Let us be vitally united to Christ, and so we shall be planted together in the likeness of his death, and also in the likeness of his resurrection; and, as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also shall be made to walk in newness of life. Realizing by faith our union with Christ, may we be enabled to yield ourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Make us willing and faithful in thy service; and let us have grace to pay an unconstrained obedience to thy law. Let thy people every where become more sensible of the Redeemer's excellence and attractions. And O may the eyes of a blinded world be opened, that men may see what perfections they are despising, on what winning majesty and adorable goodness they are turning their backs, when they reject the approaches of Jesus. We implore a blessing, O Lord, upon our beloved native land. Deal not with us as we have sinned, neither reward us according to our iniquities. Be gracious to our sovereign. Bless the Reformed churches. May the work of their reformation continue to go forward. Bless thou the church to which we belong—her courts, her pastors, her flocks. May her efforts to promulgate the gospel, and to convey the saving knowledge of Jesus to the perishing multitudes, both at home and abroad, be crowned with signal success. And now, O our God, what wait we for? As thou hast mercifully kept us this day, so do thou guard us in the watches of the night. And remember not against us any of our innumerable transgressions, but receive us graciously, and love us freely; for the sake of Jesus our Saviour. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXII. 4.

SCRIPTURE—1 KINGS XIX.

REMARKS.

The servants and people of God need not be surprised to find that their zeal in the cause of truth and holiness has excited against them the resentment and violence of ungodly men. But the rage of their

enemies, like the impotent threatenings of Jezebel, cannot, without the divine permission, hurt their persons, far less can it hinder their work. It is surprising that Elijah, after having set Ahab at defiance, should now run away for fear of his wife. The path of duty lay open before him. God had given him a public triumph over the prophets of Baal, and he ought to have followed up his victory, by abolishing every vestige of idolatry in the land. There was nothing in his present circumstances to extenuate, whilst there was every thing in his past experience to aggravate the sinfulness of his conduct in attempting to avoid danger by retirement, and in wishing to be released from it by death. It would have been a righteous thing in God to take the impatient and desponding prophet at his word. But Elijah had not yet finished his work, and the gracious Master whom he served seasonably provided for his support and encouragement. Mount Horeb, where the Most High had conversed with Moses, the giver of the law, was, with obvious propriety, chosen to be the scene of an interview with Elijah, the restorer of the law. But how different were the circumstances and the subject of the manifestation! The mountain, indeed, now as formerly exhibited very awful and alarming appearances; but God was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire. It was a dispensation of pure and condescending mercy, adapted to the peculiar state of the prophet's mind, and altogether calculated to revive his drooping courage, and dissipate his groundless fears. Elijah lived in a degenerate age, but he received the comforting assurance that the friends of religion were much more numerous than he had supposed. The same voice which relieved his despondency and silenced his murmuring complaints, called him forth to active exertion. Means were required to carry on the work of national reformation which he had begun. Israel stood in need of chastisement, and a rod of correction had been provided in the person of Hazael, whom the prophet was now commanded to anoint to be king over Syria. The family of Ahab must be cut off, and for this special purpose Jehu was to be invested with the government of Israel. Elijah himself was about to be removed, but he obtained all that his heart could desire in being employed to consecrate a successor who should inherit his spirit, and imitate his example, and supply his place. God is never at a loss for instruments to fulfil his purposes and promote his cause. He not only appoints the work which they have to do, but gives them both the qualification for it and success in it. It is the duty of his servants humbly and steadfastly to follow his direction, to hold themselves at his disposal, and confide in his promises for all that they need. Let them patiently wait his time, and carefully attend to his word, and labour with a single eye to his glory instant in prayer, not weary in well-doing, hoping unto the end for the glory that shall be revealed at the day of the Lord Jesus, when they shall know that their labour has not been in vain in the Lord.

PRAYER.

O Lord, let thy mercy be on us, as we do hope and trust in thee. We have nothing of our own

o recommend us to thy favour, but we come to thee in the name of him whom thou hearest always, and for whose righteousness' sake thou art well pleased with all them that truly desire to seek and serve thee. We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no God besides thee, and that there is no salvation in any other. Teach us thy way, and lead us in it. Deliver us from the ignorance, the impenitence, the enmity, and the obduracy of an unbelieving heart. Convince us of our demerit and danger as sinners, and determine us to count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, that we may win Christ, and be found in him. Open the eyes of our understanding that we may see the wonders of thy law, and enlarge our hearts that we may run in the way of thy commandments. May Christ be formed in us, that we may abide in him, and bring forth much fruit. Let us never be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, nor indifferent to his cause. Make us willing both to spend and be spent in his service and for his sake. Fortify us against the fear of man, which bringeth a snare, and enable us to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Keep us back from all presumptuous sin, and permit us neither to despise thy chastening, nor to faint under thy rebuke. May we know Christ in the fellowship of his sufferings, and choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. We thank thee, O Lord, for the light, and liberty, and grace of the gospel dispensation. Blessed are our eyes for they see, and our ears for they hear. May the still small voice of mercy which speaks to us, speedily convey its glad tidings of great joy to all people. Be mindful of thy covenant of promise, and give to thy Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. Thou hast never left thyself without a witness, and we rejoice to believe that even in this present time of darkness and degeneracy there is still a remnant according to the election of grace. Pour out thy Spirit upon all flesh, and add to thy church daily many such as shall be saved. We offer unto thee our sacrifice of praise for the mercies of the past night, and for the comforts and prospects of another morning. Keep us in thy fear all the day long. Preserve on our minds a constant and commanding sense of thy presence, so that we may both act and endure as seeing him who is invisible. May we walk humbly with God, and circumspectly before men, in all things adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour, by a conversation such as becometh the

gospel. Prepare us for every duty and trial. Feed us with food convenient, and make thy grace sufficient for us. Perfect that which concerns us, and grant that the meditations of our heart, and the words of our mouth may find acceptance in thy sight, through Christ, our strength and Redeemer. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LXIV.

SCRIPTURE—JOHN XXI.

REMARKS.

Our Lord paid his third visit to the disciples when they were engaged in their ordinary occupation of fishermen. He came to them unsought and unexpected. But the meeting was not the less useful on that account, and it was for that very reason the more acceptable and the more delightful. No situation can exclude the presence of Christ from his people; and as it is their privilege to have access to him at all times and in all places, so it is their duty constantly to realize his presence, and to hold communion with him in their secular employments as well as in their devotional exercises.

This interview was calculated to serve many important purposes. The disciples were weak in faith, and Jesus intended, by his appearance and intercourse, to satisfy their minds with regard to the fact of his resurrection, and thus to prepare them for bearing testimony to this truth in the execution of their apostolic commission. At the same time he set before them such an exhibition of his peculiar character, of his infinite condescension, and power, and compassion, and wisdom, and love as would not fail to engage their hearts in his service, and animate them to the work of labour and suffering on which they were about to enter.

It was not to obtain information that our Lord addressed to Peter the searching question, 'Lovest thou me?' He 'needed not that any should testify of man, for he knoweth what is in man.' But he wished to give his lately apostate and now penitent disciple an opportunity of honouring, by a declaration of his continued and undiminished affection, the Master whom he had treacherously deserted and denied. And this expression of his repentance was made in some degree to correspond with his offence; for as Peter had denied Christ three times, so now he as often professed an ardent attachment to his person and cause. Peter had learned from experience to be cautious and reserved in speaking of himself. His answers were sufficiently decided, but they discovered a modesty and diffidence altogether the reverse of what he formerly exhibited, and which are necessary in forming a judgment of our own character, and especially in expressing it to him who 'knoweth all things,' and who requireth truth in the inward parts.

The believer's love to Christ is the best proof of

Christ's love to him. But Peter obtained another and a most gracious and encouraging token of the Saviour's acceptance. He had been sowing in tears, and he now reaped in joy. Jesus not only owned him as a follower, and assured him of forgiveness and favour, but conferred upon him a distinguishing mark of his confidence, by committing to him the pastoral care of his flock. 'He knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust.' 'A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.'

But the Saviour is no less wise than gracious in the exercise of his love. Peter stood in need of correction as well as of comfort. His own duty and destiny had been clearly pointed out to him, and with this he should have been contented and thankful. But he wished to know more than his divine Master thought fit to reveal; and his inquiry was prompted by vain curiosity and not by a regard to his own interests. Our Lord answered his request not by a useless compliance, but by a pointed and profitable rebuke. Secret things belong to the Lord, but things that are revealed belong to us and to our children. Instead of seeking to be wise above what is written, our duty is, by the diligent, and patient, and prayerful searching of the scriptures, to cultivate the attainment of that knowledge which has been graciously placed within our reach. The chief subject of our inquiry should be, not what God intends to do with us or with others, but what he requires us to do for him. Let us carefully improve the light we have, and walk by faith, relying on the promise that what we know not now we shall know hereafter.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits; the fountain of our mercies and the foundation of our hopes. Early were we cast on thy care, and thou hast cared for us. Thou didst open thine hand and we were filled with good. In danger thou hast been our defence; in trouble thou hast been our support and consolation; thou hast delivered our eyes from tears, our feet from falling, and our souls from death. Bless the Lord, then, O our souls, and all that is within us be stirred up to bless and magnify his holy name. O Lord, we had destroyed ourselves, but in thee is our help. When no other eye pitied, and no other hand could help, thine eye pitied us, and thine almighty arm wrought out salvation for us. He that is mighty hath done great things for us. Blessed be he who came in the name of the Lord to save us. We rejoice that he who was delivered for our offences was raised again for our justification, and that by many infallible proofs he showed himself alive to his disciples, the chosen witnesses of his resurrection. We believe in the testimony which thou didst give by them concerning Christ, that he not only died for our sins, according to the scriptures, but rose

again the first fruits of them that sleep. May we be planted together in the likeness of his death, that we may be also in the likeness of his resurrection. May it appear that we have been quickened together with Christ, by our seeking those things which are above, where he sitteth at the right hand of God, and by our striving if by any means we may attain unto the resurrection of the dead. We desire, O Lord, that Christ may dwell in our hearts, and that he may be precious to us as he is to them that believe. May the love of Christ be not only in us, but may it constrain us so to feel and act that, appealing to the Searcher of hearts, we may be enabled to say, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Animated by the love of Christ, may we find his service to be perfect freedom, and know from experience that his yoke is easy and his burden light. Rooted and grounded in love, may we hold fast the profession of our faith and the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end, and never be moved away from the hope of the gospel, nor be of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them who believe to the saving of their souls. O Lord, teach us thy statutes, and give us a competent share of that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation. Suffer us not to employ, on the characters and concerns of others, that attention which is due to our own; nor let us ever forget that one thing is needful, and that it will profit us nothing to have gained the whole world if we lose our own souls. We offer our tribute of thanksgiving for the mercies of the day that has now come to a close. Pardon the sin we may have contracted, and grant us that repentance which is unto salvation. We commit ourselves to thy care and keeping during this night, and pray that we may obtain quiet and refreshing rest. Prepare us for what remains of our day and duty, and for the night of death in which no man can work. Bless our friends with thy favour, and our enemies with thy forgiveness. May thy grace be on all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and may thy way be soon known on the earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Graciously hear the voice of our petitions, and unto thy name, through Christ, be glory now and for ever Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLVI.

SCRIPTURE—1 KINGS XXI.

REMARKS.

The terms which Ahab proposed for the purchase of Naboth's vineyard, were fair and reasonable; but the desire he felt was both questionable in its object, and immoderate in its exercise. It was not from disrespect to the king, but in obedience to God, that Naboth refused to comply with Ahab's request; yet the reason assigned by him, instead of satisfying Ahab, served only to mortify and distress him. Such is the vanity of earthly things, that not all the resources of his kingdom, not even the possessions of a world could have made Ahab contented and happy, so long as he had not the vineyard of Naboth for a garden of herbs. And such is the depravity of the human heart, that a failure in the pursuit of one trifling object, is sufficient to embitter the joy of success in the attainment of every other. Ahab sinned not only in coveting the property of another, but in setting his affections upon it, and in allowing himself to become miserable through the want of it. This conduct was peculiarly criminal in the king, whose duty it was to protect his subjects from injustice and oppression.

The indulgence of one sin, often requires another to complete or conceal it. Ahab could not bear a refusal, and yet he was not prepared to proceed to extremities, in order to force a compliance with his request. But in Jezebel he found an instrument exactly suited to his purpose. She well knew what sort of comfort Ahab wanted, and she could count on his approval of any measures to which she might have recourse in his name. In seeking to fulfil his wishes, she at the same time, probably gratified her own personal enmity to Naboth, who seems to have been a religious man, and one of the few who had not bowed the knee to Baal. The scheme which she adopted, was distinguished no less by its unprincipled ingenuity, than its atrocious wickedness. Naboth might have been cut off by private assassination. But it was necessary that his death should be the result of an accusation, which involved the forfeiture of his inheritance. The means which Jezebel employed to give to the murder of Naboth an appearance of justice, only tended to aggravate its criminality. No sins are more dishonouring to God, or more injurious to men, than those which they commit under the cloak of a pretended regard for the interests of religion. Ahab made the guilt of Jezebel his own, by giving his sanction to all that she had done, and by consenting to reap the fruit of her iniquity. But the triumph of the wicked is short. Ahab, indeed, attained to the object of his ambition, but the wrath which he had provoked, came upon him in the very act of taking possession. He now, for the first time, trembled at the word of the Lord. But his humility was the effect of selfish fear, not of godly sorrow; yet, it was graciously owned as the reason for a mitigation of the punishment which had been threatened against him. If God has respect to mere outward abasement, by making it

the occasion of averting temporal calamity from the sinner, how much more will he accept of true repentance, by conferring upon it the privilege of a deliverance from those evils which are spiritual and eternal? Let us seek from him that repentance which we all need, and which he alone can give; and whilst we exercise it in dependence on his grace, and endeavour to express it in the obedience of his commandments, let us gratefully ascribe the praise of its efficacy, both in procuring forgiveness, and in promoting holiness, to the work of Christ, who redeemed us to God by his blood, that he might present us 'faultless and blameless, before the presence of his Father's glory, with exceeding joy.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou madest all things by thy power and for thy glory. The earth is thine, with the fulness thereof: thine are all the creatures that live upon it, they all wait on thee. Lord, thou preservest man and beast. How precious is thy grace! Thine is the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the raiment we put on. Make us to feel our dependence on thy care, and our obligations to thy bounty. May the gifts of thy providence, of which we partake every moment, raise our thoughts to thee, from whom all blessings flow; and may our preserved lives be cheerfully spent in thy service, and zealously consecrated to thy praise. Teach us contentment, that we may know how to be abased and how to abound. Convince us that we deserve nothing at thy hand but indignation and wrath, as the punishment of our sin, and that we are not worthy even of the least of all thy mercies. Dispose us to receive with gratitude, to enjoy with moderation, and to improve with diligence, our allotted share of worldly good. Let us not seek great things for ourselves, but may we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, in the belief that all other things necessary will then be added unto us. Suffer us not to murmur under our own trials and disappointments, nor to envy the prosperity, or covet the possessions of others. Enable us to cast all our cares upon him who careth for us, and in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make our requests known unto God. We come to thee as the God of all grace, who hast promised to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask it. O satisfy us early with thy mercy. Take away the stony heart out of our flesh, and renew within us a right spirit. May he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine into our hearts, to give us the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ; and may the light which is in us, be made to shine forth before men, so that others, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven. We

bless thee, O Lord, for the care with which thou hast watched over and preserved us during the past night, and for the privilege which thou hast afforded us of entering on the duties and enjoyments of another day. Prepare us for our work and our warfare: keep us from the evil that is in the world. May we act up to our principles, and hold fast our profession, and walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. Guide us by thy counsel, sustain us by thy providence, strengthen with might by thy Spirit in the inner man, and bless us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, so that we may serve thee acceptably, and our generation usefully, according to thy will; and be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, through Christ our strength and Redeemer. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 11—15.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS I.

REMARKS.

The purposes for which Jesus had come into the world were now fully accomplished, and the time had arrived when he should leave the world, and return to his Father. It was expedient that he should go away, and the disciples had been taught to expect his removal. Yet the event took them by surprise. The hope which they fondly cherished of a deliverance to their country, from the Roman yoke, under the reign of Messiah, had not been fulfilled; and they could not refrain from expressing the anxiety which they felt on this subject by proposing the question, 'Lord, wilt thou, at this time, restore the kingdom to Israel?' But they spoke in ignorance, and from a spirit of worldly-mindedness, and under a gross misapprehension of the character of Christ, and the nature of his redemption. Our Lord gently reproved their presumption, and effectually corrected their error by turning their minds away from the vain thought of a temporal kingdom, to the promised blessings of that spiritual kingdom in the erection of which they were to act an important part.

Jesus did not leave his disciples comfortless. He sent his angels to them with a message of consolation, assuring them of his return. Those heavens, which then received him, shall retain him until the time of the restitution of all things; but he will come again in the same human body which he then took with him to heaven, without sin unto salvation, and they that look for him shall be caught up to meet him in the air, and shall appear and be ever with him in glory. But the disciples had the prospect of another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, whom Christ promised to send, both in his supernatural and sanctifying influence, to fit them for the work they

had to do, and for the conflicts they had to sustain, and the trials they had to undergo, in his service and for his sake. And the Spirit was to abide with the disciples throughout all their successive generations; not indeed in his miraculous gifts, which were required only in the infancy of the church, but in his saving influences, which are dispensed in our day, and which will continue to be enjoyed to the end of time.

Having promised the effectual agency to ensure the success of his work, Christ also provided the necessary instrumentality to carry it forward. For this purpose he chose the twelve apostles, whom he called to labour in his vineyard. But one vacancy had been occasioned by the death of Judas the traitor: and it became the duty of the eleven who survived to supply his place. The election was conducted with great prudence and perfect impartiality. They acted up to the best of their judgment in selecting the two fittest individuals as candidates for the sacred office, and then left it to the Head of the church to make his own choice. The use of the lot was simply an appeal to him: and it was preceded by a still more direct appeal to him in solemn prayer. The decision that followed was altogether the result of his influence, and it commanded the grateful acquiescence of the other apostles, who regarded it as a manifest token of divine favour, and welcomed it as an additional instrument of the divine glory. These holy men have set us a valuable example, particularly in their attention to prayer. Like them, we should connect prayer with every thing that we do or suffer; asking counsel, and direction, and succour, and strength, for our guidance and support, especially in circumstances of painful or perplexing difficulty; humbly looking and preparing for the glories of that blessed kingdom, in which prayer shall be succeeded by praise, and the fight of faith, by the song of eternal victory.

PRAYER.

O God, thou art exalted far above all blessing and praise. Thou dwellest in the high and holy place. Yet thou humblest thyself to behold the things that are under the sun; thou dwellest with him that is of an humble and contrite heart, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one. In thy sight, O Lord, we are less than nothing and vanity. In us dwelleth no good thing. Our own hearts condemn us, and thou art greater than our hearts and knowest all things. What are we, O Lord and what is our father's house, that thou hast brought us hitherto? We admire and extol the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty, might become rich. We thank thee, that having finished his work on earth, he took possession of his reward in heaven and that he now sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and ever liveth to plead the cause, and present the prayers of his people, and

to dispense all needful supplies of grace, to help them in every time of need. Enable us, O Lord, to follow Christ, whither he has ascended by setting our affections on things above, and by having our conversation in heaven, whence we look for the Saviour. As strangers and pilgrims on the earth, may we spend the time of our sojourning here in fear; using the world, as not abusing it, and looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour, who shall change these vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body. Having this hope in him, may we purify ourselves even as he is pure. May we give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, by adding to our faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity; may these things not only be in us, but abound in us, so that we may be neither barren nor unfruitful in the work of the Lord. O Lord, remember thy covenant of promise, and bring in thine ancient people the Jews, with the fulness of the Gentiles. May the Sun of righteousness soon arise, and shine on all the kingdoms of this world, causing them to become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ. Let wickedness come to a speedy and final end. May righteousness every where flow down the streets as a stream, and judgment as a mighty river. We offer our humble ascriptions of gratitude for thy mercy and goodness during the past day. Guard us from danger during the silent watches of the night, and give us the sleep of thy beloved. Put us, and keep us in a state of readiness for the duties of life, for the event of death, and for the joys of immortality. Fill us with the Spirit of thy grace, and grant us acceptance in our persons and services, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM V. 1—4.

SCRIPTURE—I KINGS XXII.

REMARKS.

How instructive the circumstances attending the death of Ahab. We behold here a striking instance of the desperate wickedness and folly of an unrenewed heart, and of the holiness, truth, and sovereignty of Jehovah. Ahab's wounded pride and restless ambition incite him to go up against Ramoth-Gilead. Jehoshaphat, unwarrantably persuaded to aid him, proposed first to take counsel of the Lord, but the idolatrous Ahab had no wish to consult the God by whom kings reign, and with whom is the issue of battles.

Baal's prophets, who at this time assured him of success, were his chosen advisers, and in these lying oracles he still put his trust, notwithstanding all God had done to show him the sin of his idolatry. To satisfy the pious Jehoshaphat, who resented this appeal, Micaiah a prophet of the true God, was called. We find he at first answers in the very words of the false prophets, an incident which may appear inconsistent with the character he bore, and his address to the messengers sent to summon him, but admitting an explanation that may put to silence the scoffer, and teach us the prophet's wisdom. Micaiah knew Ahab hated him and his counsel, and favoured and trusted the prophets of Baal, and assuming, as we may justly suppose, a tone and manner expressing a becoming resentment of this guilty preference, replied in the words of these deceivers. As much as say, Why ask my counsel? you hate me and will not believe my word. You have your own prophets. They have made their revelation, you are resolved to follow it. Obey their voice since you wish it, and then you will believe you will prosper. Ahab saw, and keenly felt the irony of this answer. He was not an instant deceived by it, and hence abjured Micaiah to tell the truth. When Micaiah, in reply, utters the sad presage of Ahab's ruin, the reckless monarch is enraged by the warning, and the expression of his impious anger draws from the prophet a more distinct revelation of the divine decrees concerning him.

The vision in which these are detailed, is not to be viewed as a real scene in the celestial world, but having an allusion to the two kings, sitting as mentioned, on thrones, with their prophets before them, and designed to represent to them, and to all men, the sovereign majesty and dominion of the God whose throne is in heaven, the omnipotence and universality of his providence, and that he makes the powers of darkness, the passions of men, and all things, work together, to accomplish his righteous counsels.

Satan freed from restraint, becomes a lying spirit in the mouths of Ahab's prophets, and as God may in one sense be said to do, what he permits to be done, Ahab is told that his delusion is from the Lord, who had spoken evil concerning him.

It is necessary, however, in order to explain and vindicate the divine procedure in this, and in like cases, to keep in mind, that while God tempteth no man to evil, in the sense that he wills him to commit sin, it is still in an important sense true, that he tempts, tries, and proves men. And although he wills none to sin, in order that they may be miserable, it is nevertheless his decree, that all who wilfully abuse or resist the light, means, and calls to salvation he hath given them, and obstinately persist in sin, shall utterly perish. And the temptations of Satan and the world are truly ordained by God, to try, bring out, and prove the inward dispositions, and real characters of men, with a view to the awards of his righteous judgments.

PRAYER.

Most holy and merciful God, we lift our hearts to thee this morning in the name of our blessed

Mediator; and we pray that thou wouldst enable us, by thy Spirit, ever to worship thee with deep reverence of soul, and a humble confidence in thy love. Thou alone art God, the fountain of all good, and beside thee there is no Saviour. We praise thee as the Maker, and the Sovereign, and disposer of all things. Thy throne is in the heavens, and judgment and righteousness are ever its habitation; and thy face is set against all who do evil, to cut off their remembrance from the earth. But we rejoice, O Lord, to know that thou art compassionate, as well as holy, and while there is no safety to sinners under thy righteous providence, that all thy ways are mercy and peace to such as keep thy covenant, and thy testimonies, to do them. We are utterly unworthy, O Lord, to approach thee, or take thy name into our lips, for we were born in sin, and are the natural heirs of wrath; we cannot reckon the multitude of our actual transgressions, for in all things we come short of thy glory. Our hopes of acceptance are entirely in thy mercy, and we adore thee for the blessed gospel of thy well-beloved Son, in which we are assured that through the merits of his sacrifice, thou canst be both just and merciful in thy dealings with us sinners who believe in his name. O may the blood of his perfect and accepted atonement, ever speak peace to our consciences, and dispel from our hearts all apprehensions of thy wrath, and may we ever be able to joy in thee through Jesus Christ, who has reconciled and bought us. Grant, we beseech thee, that we may ever feel the obligations and constraining influences of thine infinite love and grace, and ever live in obedience to them. O Lord, we have every thing to ask from thee, that we may serve thee aright, or ever hope to fulfil thy holy and good commandments. We beseech thee to grant us thy Holy Spirit, to enable us to repent truly of all our sins, and to serve thee without fear, in holiness and righteousness all our days. We would ever bear in mind that we live in a world lying in wickedness. May we have grace to watch and pray that we never enter into temptation, and may be strengthened to shun every scene and every alliance that would lead us into sin. O Lord, we are only safe when under thy protection. Do thou preserve us from evil, and make thy grace sufficient for us, that we may be faithful in every duty, and patient under every trial. May our faith in thy love and promises, and presence, never fail us amid all the trials that may encompass us. May we cleave to thee, and over all the evils that may surround us may we

be more than conquerors through him that loved us. O Lord, we bless thee for having preserved us over another night, and for thy goodness this morning; give us this day our daily bread; fit us for all our duties, and in all we think or do may we have an aim to thy approbation and glory. We pray, O Lord, for all the families of mankind. Have mercy on the unenlightened heathen, and give success to the means using to instruct and convert them. May Jesus be given for salvation to the ends of the earth. May all our friends and benefactors be partakers of thy grace. Hear and save all in trouble. Let us not forget that the day of life is short, and that the best preparation for its trials and close is to spend the hours of health and season of activity in thy service. Hear, O Lord, and accept of us and our worship, for the sake of Jesus, and to thy name be all praise, now and for ever. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LX. 1—4.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS II.

REMARKS.

The particulars of this chapter are among the most remarkable in the inspired records of the church of Christ. Whether we view the events of Pentecost in themselves as miracles, or as the completion of important predictions and promises, or in their immediate and remote effects in the history of the church, or in the encouragement and direction they afford to all believers, they are in every aspect of vital and precious interest, and may well excite our devout, and grateful, and admiring meditation.

The multitudes who witnessed the effusion of the Spirit and works of the apostles, are to all ages pledges of their reality. In them the divine Spirit that spake by Isaiah and Joel, in the promises of the Father and of Jesus, sets to his seal the divinity of the apostles' commission and doctrine. The works in themselves attest the same facts. And while the truth of Christianity, generally, is thus signally proved, the resurrection of Jesus, his exaltation to the right hand of God, and investiture as our Mediator, with all power in heaven and earth, are fully demonstrated.

These are momentous facts and truths, in reference to the faith, and peace, and virtue, the comfort and hopes of our immortal souls. Let us here also adore the wisdom of God in the gift of tongues, both as a necessary and fit means to diffuse the gospel throughout the world, and as opening a way for the successful use of all the other apostolic endowments. These gifts farther remind us what the will of the Saviour is, as to the extent of the propagation of his gospel, and what in this respect is the duty of every Chris-

tian. They bid us cease not in our endeavours and prayers, till Jesus be given for salvation to the ends of the earth. And more than this, they may encourage us in our Christian duties and warfare, as they may assure us of all the necessary influences by which we are built up in holiness and comfort, and sealed to the day of redemption. Hath the promise of the Spirit been thus wonderfully realized, and hath he who is the fountain of all grace promised the Holy Spirit to all who ask him, how firmly may every believing suppliant rely on his all-sufficient aids and consolations in every hour of need.

We here learn that the best gifts may be abused, the greatest blessings maligned by evil and ignorant men. The mockery and calumny of some Jews, who probably knew no language but Hebrew, gave occasion to Peter to show, that what caused the derision of some, and the astonishment of the multitude, was just what Joel foretold would happen in Messiah's day. And farther, that the crucified Jesus, to whose divine origin his miracles bore witness, was the Messiah promised. The wonderful humiliation of Jesus had indeed given them offence, and has been a stumbling-block to proud reason in all times, but this, as the apostle shows, having been ordained and explicitly predicted by God, instead of being viewed as a disparagement of his claims, was a manifest evidence of their truth. That Messiah was to die and rise again, and ascend to supreme power in heaven, David foretold. And as Jesus predicted all this of himself, at the same time promising after he ascended, to pour the Holy Spirit on his disciples, and enable them to work great miracles, the visible fulfilment of this promise was an unanswerable proof in addition to the testimony of the apostles, that Jesus who was crucified had risen from the dead, ascended, was seated on the throne of Zion, and was both Lord and Christ.

Peter's discourse had great force of truth and reason. Arguments may convince, however, but without grace will never convert a soul. On the present occasion the saving influence was not withheld. The day of Pentecost was distinguished not less by a rich effusion of the Spirit's converting influences, than his preternatural gifts, by which multitudes of such as should be saved believed.

PRAYER.

Father of mercies, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, we beseech thee to pour on us thy Holy Spirit, that we may know thee savingly, and glorify thee in soul and body, which are thine. We lament our inability to serve thee, as thou hast a right to require of us, and thy daily benefits oblige us to do. We confess and would deplore that we are naturally alienated from thee in heart and mind, and dead in sin. We neither see thee in thy works nor own thee in thy providence as we ought, and while thou speakest to us by thy Son, we are too oft deaf to the voice that calls us to our God, and to virtue and happiness. Have compassion on us, most gracious God; see Jesus

our shield, look on us in the face of thine Anointed, and for his sake forgive all our iniquities; restore our souls, and love us freely. Convince us, we beseech thee, of the evil of our manifold sins, and our native weakness and corruption, and may we be in the daily exercise of a sincere repentance and lively faith on the God of our salvation. We would stir up all that is within us to bless thy name for what thou hast done to save us. We adore thee for the sure grounds on which thou callest us to rest our faith, and for the pledges thou hast given that thou wilt fulfil to all who believe the great and precious promises of thy holy word. We rejoice to know that thou hast exalted to thy right hand, a prince and Saviour, who is God in our nature, who knows our infirmities and temptations, and is ever ready to succour us in need, and save to the uttermost all who come to thee in his name. May we joyfully receive and ever rest on him for our salvation, and may he be formed in our hearts the hope of glory. Forbid, O Lord, we should be satisfied with a faith that doth not sanctify our hearts. May our faith destroy all pride, and selfishness, and worldliness in our souls, and work in us love, and humility, and mercy, and virtue, and heavenly-mindedness, and peace. May we study to be living epistles of the gospel, read of all men. May we strive to abound in the fruits of thy Spirit. Forbid that by unbelief or sin we should ever grieve him, or quench his holy influences. May we ever cherish and obey his teachings, and may we have his witness that we are thy children, and the heirs of immortality. We adore thee for thy care over us, and the many mercies we have this day enjoyed. Blot out the sins we have committed against thee, and all our short-comings; enable us in our after life, if thou art pleased to spare us, to live more to thy glory. May thy word have free course and be glorified. Hasten the time when the reign of truth, and love, and righteousness shall be universal on earth. Have mercy on the poor and afflicted, and on the bereaved and the dying. Keep us ever in mind that our days and nights are numbered; prepare us for their end. We commit ourselves to thy protection through the night, and whether it be thy will to call us hence ere another morning dawns, or raise us to see its light, may we be prepared for all the ordinations of thy merciful and righteous providence. Accept of our services, and answer our prayers, for the sake of Jesus, and to thy name be all glory, now and ever. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXVII. 37—40.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS I.

REMARKS.

Ahaziah did not profit by the lesson read to him and Israel, in the history and fate of Ahab. Like his father, he served Baal, and did evil in the sight of the Lord. But he soon learned that God is ever jealous of his honour, and set against all workers of iniquity, to cut off their remembrance from the earth. The first token of divine displeasure shown him, was the revolt and loss of Moab. The next, what many might think a mere accident, a fall which endangered his life, was an event in providence, designed to teach his dependence on God, and his sin in forsaking him. Had these events been rightly improved, they might have led Ahaziah to repentance and faith, to seek the mercy of his offended Maker. But he had no pleasure in thinking of the God in whose hands are the lives of all men, who killeth and maketh alive, who woundeth and healeth. An idolater in heart and practice, he sends to the city of the Philistines to consult an idol—the God of Ekron, whether he would recover. His conduct in this act, and other particulars noticed in this chapter, was marked by heinous and aggravated guilt. Idolatry was a sin, of all others, most offensive to Jehovah. He had already taught Israel, in Ahab's time, by a signal miracle, and the destruction of Baal's prophets, that Baal was no God, and his prophets deceivers. But this memorable lesson was soon forgotten, and so flagrant and early a neglect of it, as that shown by Ahaziah, accounts for and justifies that severe and awful manifestation of divine wrath recorded in this chapter. Here was a king of Israel, whose station and authority made his example powerful for good or evil, virtually proclaiming to all Israel and heathen nations, that he had no respect for, nor faith in, the God of Israel, and preferred to him a heathen idol.

When we think of this, we can have no cause to wonder at the fatal message Elijah sent back the king's servants to deliver to him. Had Ahaziah humbled himself before God, the mortal sentence might have been revoked. But instead of this, it kindled his rage against the prophet of the Lord, and made him instantly determine on Elijah's destruction.

The command to his captains and soldiers to go and seize the prophet, and the order to a third detachment, after two had been miraculously consumed by fire, were fearful aggravations of his sin. He hardens his heart in the face of miraculous judgments, refuses to repent and be reconciled, and, as it were, openly defies and contends against the God of heaven and earth. How desperately wicked the human heart! What infatuation is there in sin!

Let us not suppose that Elijah's prayer for the judgment here detailed, proceeded either from fear or resentment. He was directed in his conduct by the Spirit of God. And his prayer for the consuming fire, was the means God appointed to vindicate the authority of his prophet; to teach Ahaziah, and Israel, and all nations, that the God of Israel was able both

to save life, and destroy it; while the signal destruction of the soldiers, and the death of Ahaziah, were designed to proclaim to the Israelites and all people, that the God of Elijah would not suffer his glory to be given to an idol, and that all who went after, countenanced, or defended the worship of false gods, would expose themselves to as certain ruin as that which overwhelmed the captains and soldiers of the king of Israel.

Let us ever beware of the sin that merits and lays open to such consequences. Let us be faithful to our God and Saviour, and neither death, nor life, nor any creature, shall ever separate us from his love which is in Christ Jesus.

PRAYER.

O thou who art the unseen, but omnipotent Creator, and disposer of all things, hear our prayers this morning, and bless us, we beseech thee, for the sake of thy beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour. Thou art our God, and we will ever seek and praise thee. There is no God but thee. The objects worshipped by blinded heathens are the works of their own hands, or the creatures of delusion, but thou art the true and living God, thou art an everlasting king. Who, O Lord, would not fear thy great name? Thou art glorious in holiness, ever doing wonders. We rejoice, O Lord, to know, that although thine arm be mighty to destroy, it is also mighty to save. Blessed are all they who love and trust thee. Thy favour is life. Thou art as a wall of fire around thy servants in times of trouble; a thousand shall fall at their sides, and ten thousand at their right hand; but it shall not come nigh unto them, for they have the Lord for their defence, and the Most High for their habitation. Most gracious God, we confess and lament that we have never been affected as we ought, by thy majesty and holiness, or thy goodness and mercy. We have never sought nor trusted, nor loved and served thee, as thou hast a right to expect we always should have done. We have too much loved and gone after idols. When in health, we have sought our happiness in the broken and empty cisterns of this world; and when in sickness or trouble, we have sought deliverance, and placed our dependence more on means, and creature helps and comforters, than on thee, the giver and restorer of life, the source of all consolation. We have forgotten the hand that has fed us, and lightly esteemed the rock of our salvation. We confess, O Lord, that it is because of thine infinite forbearance and compassion we have not been consumed by the fire of thy righteous judgments; and we bless thee for thy long-suffering and mercy. Humble us, we beseech thee, under a deep sense of our ungodli-

ness and ingratitude; and may thy patience lead us to repentance. And we adore thee for that proof of thine infinite love thou hast given us, in the gift of thine eternal Son, to die for us and save us from all our iniquities. May we feel our absolute need of his salvation; and by a true and living faith, be made partakers of it. Grant that an experience of thy redeeming mercy, may ever constrain us to love and serve thee. Be thou ever our covenant God, and may we be unto thee a faithful and devoted people. O Lord, we beseech thee to renew our hearts more and more. May thy Holy Spirit keep our ever-erring affections from departing from thee, and lead us ever to seek our happiness in doing thy will, and promoting thy glory. Do thou be our strength in the hour of temptation, and our refuge in times of trouble. Never leave us, we entreat thee, and keep us by thy power and grace to the day of salvation. May the goodness that has blessed us during the night watches, follow us through this day. Supply our wants, teach us our duties, and preserve us from all evil. Bless our kindred and friends, look in pity on all under trial, and comfort all who mourn. Hasten the time when the reign of idolatry and wickedness in heathen lands, and the prevalence of error and corruption in parts where thy gospel has been preached, shall be brought to an end. May the kingdom of grace be advanced, and the kingdom of glory hastened. And grant, O Lord, that we may so live, that at last we may be partakers of its eternal joys. And unto thy name be all power, and honour, and glory for ever. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRaise—PSALM CVI. 1—5.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS III.

REMARKS.

The sabbath and temple were duly honoured by our Lord and his disciples. Peter and John went up together at the hour of prayer. There are much true happiness and benefit in the communion of Christian friends when led by the same spirit to the house of God. They find in the exercises of the sanctuary a source of mutual endearment, improvement, and joy. Let us delight to go with them who love to keep holy the days and the seasons of prayer.

When in the path of duty, God discovers how we shall exercise our gifts so as best to promote his glory, our own and our brethren's well-being. He led the apostles to the temple at a time when they might show, by a great miracle, that the crucified

Redeemer, whose name they bore and gospel they preached, was both Lord and Christ. For nearly forty years the helpless cripple was an object of public sympathy and charity. His lameness and indigence all Jerusalem knew; and the instant and perfect cure performed in the miracle-working name of Jesus, the bitterest foes of the apostles and their gospel could neither deny nor conceal. Well might all Jerusalem, and we too, say of Peter and John, they could not have done such a work unless God was with them.

The desire of the lame man was only for a temporal benefit, and a temporal blessing. And a temporal blessing, which neither earth's gold nor man's power could confer, he did obtain; but the apostles had other and better gifts to enrich him with than his natural appetites or bodily infirmities craved. They were the chosen dispensers of that sovereign grace which heals all the soul's diseases, enables the spiritually dead and lame to walk in God's statutes and rejoice in his love, and satisfies the longings of our immortal nature with the unsearchable riches of the Saviour's mercy. And not less impotent to every thing good are our souls, than was the cripple in all respects. Our nature desires only carnal benefits. We cannot come to God nor walk with him, unless he restores our souls and gives them ability. And how happy to know, from the miracle before us, that the salvation we need and the apostles preached, is a salvation from God; a salvation in Jesus his only-begotten Son; a salvation free, suitable, and perfect. And O what power is there in the name of Jesus. There is no physician that can heal like him: no other name under heaven among men by which we can be saved. And what a blessed voice is that by which Jesus speaks in this miracle to poor, helpless, perishing sinners in all times! 'Look unto me and be ye saved.' Cast the burden of your weary heavy laden souls upon me, and ye shall find rest. And let the conduct of the restored cripple remind us of the effects a sense of the divine mercy will ever produce in all who experience it. He followed the apostles, leaped for joy, went to the temple and praised the God of his salvation. And in a similar way will we act, if we have tasted and found that the Lord is gracious. We shall follow the great Physician who has healed us, be glad in his salvation, delight to praise him in the congregation of his people, and tell, by the holiness of our walk, how truly he has saved us: how sincerely we feel and express our infinite obligations to his love.

From whatever motive it was the lame man laid hold of the apostles, whether it proceeded from grateful affection, or from a fear his infirmity might return if they left him, we may learn from the circumstance the necessity of abiding in that doctrine which has healed our diseases. Our grateful hearts will cling by faith to our divine Redeemer as altogether precious. Believing, that as a branch cannot bring forth fruit unless it abide in the vine, no more shall we unless we abide in Jesus; we shall hold and live by faith in him as the only source of wisdom, righteousness, peace, and redemption to our souls.

When satan cannot effect his purposes by keeping

sinner infidel, he seeks and often attains the same object by leading them into fatal errors. The wondering Jews seem to ascribe the miracle to some inherent virtue or power in the apostles, and not to God. And we may witness here a root of some of antichrist's worst delusions, the power, the merits, the intercession of the church and the saints. How averse are sinners to believe that they can have no power to do good or obtain it but from God! How repugnant to their thoughts the gospel truth, that a crucified Saviour is the only source of saving power and grace!

PRAYER.

Great and manifold are thy works, Lord God Almighty, in wisdom and goodness thou hast made them all. We rejoice, O Lord, to know that although all creation is thine, and eternity and its praises thy dwelling-place, thou humblest thyself to care for us thy sinful children, and to provide for our happiness. Thou didst make us at first upright, but we feel that we are transgressors, and that thy holy image has been defaced from our souls. Our understandings are blind to what is good, our wills averse to it, and our whole hearts prone to what is evil. We are unable, O Lord, of ourselves to do anything that is not sinful. Justly, O Lord, mightest thou have cast us off, and shut thine ears against our prayers, and made us everlasting monuments of thy righteous judgments. But for ever blessed be thy name that thou didst pity us, in our poor, and helpless, and lost condition, and didst so love us as to give thy beloved Son, that we might not perish but have everlasting life. O the height and depth, the breadth and length of thy love to us in Christ Jesus: it passeth knowledge. Forbid, most merciful God, that Jesus should be sent to us in vain, and that his gospel should be to us the savour of death. Let us not be guilty of neglecting this great salvation. May the miracles of power and mercy by which he proved he came from thee, confirm our faith and establish our hearts in his blessed word. And grant, O Lord, that we may be able, from our experience of its efficacy, to testify that the gospel is worthy of all acceptance. May we be made, by thy Holy Spirit, to feel more and more its power in quickening and renewing our souls, and filling us with peace and joy. Let us never forget the Lord who has redeemed us. May we ever glory in his name and in his cross, and testify our love, and gratitude, and salvation, by honouring and obeying all his commandments. Teach us, O Lord, that he who begins the good work in us, can alone carry it to perfection: and may we ever wait on Jesus, and live by faith in his wisdom, and righteousness, and grace. O Lord, we would never forget that all means owe their

efficacy to thee, nor thy promises of spiritual benefits to all who seek thy mercy. Do thou come down on our souls, O Lord, by the influences of thy heavenly grace, and refresh, and bless, and save us. Enable us, in a patient continuance in well-doing, to go on our way rejoicing, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We bless thee for having brought us in safety to the close of another day. Make us grateful for all the mercies we have this day enjoyed, and let not the sins which, in thought, or word, or deed we have been guilty of, be remembered against us. May thy kingdom come, when all nations shall be blessed in Jesus, and thy glory shall fill the earth. Bless all whom we ought to have on our hearts at thy throne of grace. And do thou, who never sleepest, watch over us during the night season, and if it be thy will, raise us to the enjoyment of thy favour on another morning. All we ask, O Lord, is in the name of Jesus, to whom, with thee and thy blessed Spirit, we ascribe all glory and praise, now and ever. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXVIII. 17.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Elijah was one of the greatest prophets of Old Testament times. It is not a little remarkable that under each of the early dispensations, an individual was translated to heaven without tasting death; for 'Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him,' Gen. v. 24. Perhaps the design of such a departure from the great law of mortality was to afford a vivid confirmation of the existence of a future state, not only for the purpose of warning the ungodly, but also of encouraging the righteous. Elijah seems to have been aware of his approaching translation, for he went to various of the schools of the prophets, to give them his parting advice, and to confirm them in the faith. In these schools young men of piety were trained up for the service of God, and fitted ultimately, by the spirit of prophecy, for their arduous work. When they had crossed Jordan, and arrived at the place whence Elijah was to be taken up, the man of God demanded of his disciple what he would have. Elisha requested as his legacy, a double portion of his spirit, that is, that he might possess the gifts and graces of his master in a double degree. It is a blessed consideration that we cannot ask too much of God, and we are commanded to covet earnestly the best gifts, 1 Cor. xii. 31. Many curious questions might be asked about the mode of Elijah's translation, but we must just take scripture as it is, and not attempt to be wise above what is re-

vealed. Fire seems an apt emblem of Elijah's zeal, which burned brightly for the honour of his God, 1 Kings xviii. 17, &c., and xix. 10. Elisha having been a witness of his master's ascent, received his mantle in token of obtaining a double portion of his spirit, as he had desired, and of his being appointed to succeed him as the messenger of God to the people of Israel. The search which was instituted by the college of the prophets, affords an unequivocal proof of the reality of his translation to heaven. Bethel contained another school of the prophets. As Elisha went up thither a number of young men (for so the word rendered 'children' signifies) attempted to turn the translation of Elijah into ridicule, and to pour contempt upon his disciple and successor. Elisha's curse was dictated by the divine Spirit which animated him, and did not proceed from private resentment; and the awful judgment that followed was intended as a punishment not merely for the act of disrespect to the prophet, but for the grievous insult given to the power and majesty of God: 'our God is a consuming fire.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The circumstances here related concerning Elijah remind us of the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. Having finished his work on earth, he ascended up to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God. Our forerunner, Christ, has now entered into the holy place, there to intercede in behalf of his people. Are we resting by faith on the living and exalted Saviour? We are farther reminded of the exemption of Christ's people from the power of the second death. We are not to expect to fare as did Enoch and Elijah, for the 'wages of sin is death;' but let us remember that, if we are Christ's people, to die is gain, for over such the second death hath no power.

The circumstances connected with Elisha teach us that God will continue a race of faithful men to carry on his work. Elijah's mantle fell upon Elisha. The spirit of the master rested upon the disciple. So shall there be a seed to serve God while the 'sun and moon endure.' Lastly, we are taught that God will not allow serious subjects to be mocked or trifled with. Young people must beware of a practice which is too common, of insulting over the infirmities of the helpless and the unfortunate, and above all, they must specially avoid every thing approaching to profanity, for God will not hold him guiltless that profaneth or abuseth 'any thing whereby he maketh himself known.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, we adore thee for the wondrous plan of redeeming love which was executed by the mission, the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank thee that Christ died, and rose, and revived, and that he has now ascended up to the right hand of the majesty on high, to intercede in behalf of those whom he has purchased with his blood. We bless thee that he is preparing mansions for his people, and that when ages close he will come again to receive them

to himself, that where he is there they may be also. We delight to think that Christ has triumphed over the grave, and that he has given a glorious earnest that over his redeemed people the second death shall have no power. May we be among the number of Christ's people; washed in his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit. Give us a closer walk with thee. May we be not conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and may it be our daily concern to die unto sin and to live unto holiness. Do thou deliver us from the power, and the practice, and the guilt of sin, and make us partakers of the divine nature, that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also may appear with him in glory. We bless thee that thou hast always had a church upon the earth; that in the darkest period of the ancient dispensation there were seven thousand who did not bow the knee to Baal, and that there have been some in every age who have not defiled their garments, but have been witnesses for religion and for God. Lord, we entreat of thee to raise up instruments to carry on thy work on the earth. Let a double portion of thy good Spirit rest upon those who minister in holy things at home or abroad, and may the mantle of the holy and good who have departed to be with Christ, rest upon their successors. Lord, we commend unto thee especially this family. Bless every member of it with all needful blessings. We thank thee that thou hast spared us to meet around the family altar; and we would bless thee for the mercies of the past night and of this morning. Go forward with us to the active duties of the day. Keep our bodies from danger and our souls from sin. May we be in thy fear all the day long. Guide us by thy counsel, and afterwards receive us into glory, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM II. 1.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS IV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In this first persecution against the Christian church was Christ's prediction fulfilled, Mark xiii. 9; Luke xxi. 12. A suffering cause is generally a growing one, and multitudes, undaunted at the persecuting spirit of their rulers, embraced the truth, ver. 4. The defence of Peter before the sanhedrim, must be regarded as a glorious proof of the fulfilment of his Master's promise to give his servants 'a mouth and wisdom,' Matt. x. 19, 20; Luke xxi. 14, 15. The boldness and honesty with which the apostle spoke,

and the faithfulness with which he charged his judges with the murder of the Son of God, cannot be sufficiently admired, and afford a fine proof of the divinity of his commission. He saw that the glory of his Master was at stake; and strong in the divine promise, he 'witnessed a good confession.' Every word was an arrow, sharply piercing the hearts of the enemies of the King, Psal. xlv. 5. The prisoner became the accuser, and the judges the self-condemned criminals. The rulers acknowledge the reality of the miracle wrought by Peter and John; judicial blindness and prejudice alone prevented them from embracing the inference that their doctrine must be from God. The reply of the apostles to the requirement of the council, no longer to speak in the name of Jesus, contains a noble vindication of the supreme authority of God, and of the rights of conscience. Alas, how often have these been lost sight of! What oceans of blood, the blood of those of whom the world was not worthy, have been shed in violation of the plain principle that God's authority is paramount, and that he alone is Lord of the conscience? The beautiful and impressive act of devotion and praise in which the followers of Jesus united, on the release of their two brethren, is founded on Psal. ii. 1, 2. and the quotation of this passage furnishes an example of the use and accommodation of scripture language in prayer. This prayer received an attestation from the Head of the church, probably in a way akin to that in which their prayers were answered on the day of Pentecost. Being thus baptized by the Spirit, their characters underwent a complete and holy change, and they consecrated themselves, their energies, talents, and property to the service and glory of their crucified and exalted Redeemer.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The conduct of the opposing parties brought under our notice in this chapter, furnishes us with some warnings and lessons.

In the Jewish rulers we see an example of conviction without conversion. In this respect they bear a remarkable resemblance to many among us who are convinced that the gospel is true, but whom the power of pride, of prejudice, or of sin prevents from following out their convictions. It is an awful thing to be convinced without being converted; to have an enlightened mind without a changed heart.

In the treatment of the two apostles we see that God often exposes his people to trial, even when they are in the path of duty. By such trials their faith, and love, and steadfastness are displayed. Christ's people must expect trials. It is part of the discipline through which they must pass on their way to glory. But in such cases they are not left comfortless. Christ's grace is sufficient for them; his strength is made perfect in his people's weakness.

In the character of the primitive believer, we see what genuine Christians ought to be. They should be people of prayer; 'in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, making their requests known unto God.' Assured that he will send an answer in peace, they should be united among each other, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and they should cultivate the

most expansive benevolence to all their brethren of mankind. If Christians sufficiently realized their obligations to Christ, they would strive, and labour, and pray more to spread his cause in a benighted world.

PRAYER.

O Lord, our Father and our God, we would desire, at the close of another day, to prostrate ourselves before the footstool of thy throne, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our once crucified but now exalted Redeemer. Do thou assist us by thy Holy Spirit, and enable us to worship thee in a right and acceptable manner. We desire to bless thee that, by the good hand of our God upon us, we have been brought to the close of another week; and looking back upon the days that are past, we would be humbled on account of our manifold sinfulness, and we would plead for mercy's sake that thou wouldst extend to us pardon, and peace, and eternal life, through the blood of thy Son Jesus Christ. We would remember the mercies of this week, and, in the view of our temporal comforts and our spiritual privileges, we would desire to raise our Ebenezer to thee, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us! O thou that hast kept our souls from death, keep, we beseech thee, our eyes from tears and our feet from falling. Guide our footsteps into the way of peace, place us upon the rock that is higher than we, and enable us to find peace, and rest, and comfort, and joy, where thy justice found satisfaction. Lord, may we rest on nothing short of Christ and his finished work. May we ever bear in mind that Christ is the only foundation of a sinner's hope, and that there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. O may we rest on nothing short of a change of character and of life. May thy Holy Spirit descend to enlighten our understandings, to renew our wills, and to warm our naturally cold hearts with the love of Christ. May that love constrain us to live not to ourselves but to Christ, who died for us and rose again. May we have union to Christ by faith, and union among each other by love. May we keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and may we ever be desirous that grace, and mercy, and peace may rest upon all the Israel of God. Lord, may we be under thy protecting care this night. Do thou, the holy One of Israel, who never slumberest, protect and bless us during the silent watches. Fit us, O God, for the solemn and interesting duties of a coming sabbath, if thou seest meet to spare us. Let this world speedily become one universal temple to Jehovah, and where the sons of men shall learn

the anthems of the blessed above. The Lord hasten it in his own time, and let the whole earth be speedily filled with his glory. **AM** we ask is for the Lord Jesus' sake. Amen.

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXIV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXXIV.

REMARKS.

The church of God has come through many changes: its history, as recorded in the Bible, is an eventful one. At one time we see it composed of a single family, floating upon the bosom of a deluged and ruined world; at another time we see it in captivity, in a land of heathenism, and sending forth a cry for deliverance to its Almighty Head. At one time we see it basking in the sunshine of God's favour; at another time mourning the deprivation of the light of his countenance, and enduring the rod of his displeasure. It was in this low condition that the church appears to have been, when the psalm before us was penned. It is the afflicted church pleading with its God for deliverance and protection; and it is equally applicable to the desponding afflicted believer, praying for light, for comfort, and for hope. How great the mercy, that however dark the clouds be that overhang the prospect of the church and people of God, they cannot shut out from the believer's view a throne of grace,—that in the darkest night of sorrow there is free access to the footstool of the eternal throne, and God's people are invited to fill their mouths with arguments, and not only to pray, but to plead with him who is their only refuge and hope. This psalm presents us with some of those arguments adapted to the circumstances of the Old Testament church; and surely if the plea of deliverance from Egyptian bondage could be urged by God's chosen people in former times, how much more powerful is the plea that can now be urged, of redemption from the bondage of sin by the Lord Jesus Christ.

At ver. 4, and subsequent verses, there is a primary reference to the destruction of the temple by the Chaldeans (2 Chron. xxxvi. 17, &c.); but the statements there made may be applied to any period in which the enemies of truth and righteousness assailed the church of the living God, and attempt to injure the cause of religion. As in the case of the Jews of old, such enemies may be permitted to meet with partial success—days of darkness and nights of sorrow may be in store for the church—religion may be brought low—faithful ministers may be silenced,—and the cause of God and of his church may be ready to expire—but still Zion will be remembered; there will be a remnant left according to the election of grace—there will be a chosen few, as in the days of Elijah, who will not bow the knee to Baal, and on whom happier times and brighter days shall

dawn. God will not desert his chosen. He will—when his time comes—pluck his hand out of his bosom, make bare his holy arm, and cause his church and people to be more than conquerors, through Christ our living Head.

In times of affliction the church is called upon to bear in mind God's dealings in the old time. God's church and people, in the darkest season of affliction and dullness, may confidently look for deliverance. Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

The psalm concludes with a fervent prayer, that the blessings which God's covenanted people enjoy may be extended to the dark places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of cruelty. O let us join in that prayer! How many, alas, are yet sitting in the region and shadow of death! On how many does no Sabbath dawn! To how many is no call given, 'Go ye up to the house of the Lord.' Let, then, our supplications arise in fervour and in faith, that these dark places may be enlightened by the Sun of righteousness,—that God may arise and plead his own cause, and that the time to favour Zion—the set time—may come. We live in interesting times. Let us be forward in aiding those schemes of benevolence that have been formed for the purpose of giving gospel light to those that sit in darkness, whether at home or abroad; and let us embrace, with eagerness, the high and holy privilege of co-operating with God in the glorious work of making the church co-extensive with the world.

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever-blessed God! Thou hast been the dwelling-place of thy church and people in every generation. We come before thy throne this morning of thy holy day, in the name of Christ, the living Head of his people, beseeching thee to pardon, to sanctify, and to bless us. We thank thee for the rest of the past night, and that we have been brought together this morning to surround the family altar, in so comfortable circumstances. Lord, we bless thee for the unspeakable privilege of hearing thy holy word read; and our prayer is, that we may be profited by it, and that we may search it more and more, seeing that it can make us wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus. Lord, go forward with us this day to thy house of prayer. May we love the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. May we joy when it is said unto us, Go ye up to the house of the Lord. May we be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and be permitted to drink of the river of thy pleasures. O to see thy power and thy glory, as thou hast manifested them in old time in thy sanctuary! And at the close of all the services of this day, may we be enabled to say, It was good for us to wait upon the Lord—this has been to us none other than the house of

God, or the gate of heaven. Lord, hasten the time when the blessings of the Sabbath shall be extended to every land, and when sacrifice and a pure offering shall be presented unto thee from the rising even unto the setting of the sun. We would remember before thee the dark places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of cruelty; and we pray that on them the Sun of righteousness may arise, with healing under his wings. Make bare thy holy arm, O God. Bless their inheritance; feed them also, and lift them up for ever. Wherever thy church is suffering affliction, Lord, do thou interpose for its relief. Wherever thy people are in sorrow and distress, Lord, do thou be near to communicate all needful comfort, and strength, and grace. We put up our prayers, O God, for thy cause, in the midst of the congregation to which we belong. Do thou strengthen and support thy servant our pastor, and enable him to come forth in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, and to speak a word in season to perishing and weary souls. Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years. May we enjoy an outpouring of thy Holy Spirit. May many be inquiring the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward. May backsliders be reclaimed, and let thine own people be cheered, and animated, and comforted, and enabled to go on their way rejoicing. Lord, have mercy upon careless sinners. Turn them from the error of their ways, and bring them to the knowledge and love of the truth. May the Spirit be universally poured out from on high, that the wilderness may become a fruitful field, and that the fruitful field may be counted for a forest. These are our prayers, our Father; do thou hear us, and pardon us, and answer us, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVI. 7.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS LXXV. LXXVI.

REMARKS.

Praise is an important part of divine worship. It is the language of heaven, and therefore ought to be learned here. Many of the Psalms are entirely occupied with praise; while, in almost all of them, there are passages in which thanksgiving is offered to the Most High. In the lxxv. Psalm, God is praised on the ground that he is near his people, and has manifested his power, and love, and glory in their experience. He takes them out of the fearful pit, and out of the miry clay: he delivers them from their spiritual foes, and the arms of his faithfulness and

love are round about them. Every converted soul is thus a monument of God's power and faithfulness; every such soul displays God's wondrous work of redemption. But God is to be praised not merely for his care over his own people, but on the more general ground that he is the Governor among the nations. All rule and authority are his. 'The Lord reigneth.'

But while the government of God is a subject of praise and consolation to the righteous, it wears a fearful aspect to the impenitent and unbelieving. 'Our God is a consuming fire.' 'For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture, and he poureth out the same; but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.' Believers may have to drink the cup of affliction, but the impenitent shall drink the cup of wrath. O how important, then, to flee to Christ, who drank the bitter cup for sinners, that we may drink of the new wine of happiness and joy in the kingdom above.

The lxxvi. Psalm appears to have been composed, with reference to some glorious victory obtained by God's ancient people over their enemies; and most commentators point to the destruction of Sennacherib's army as the occasion referred to. (See Isaiah xxxvi. 36.) The writer commences by alluding to the privileges which the Jewish nation at that time enjoyed. These privileges are now transferred to others; and we, who live in this distant isle of the Gentiles, possess advantages more glorious still than those conferred upon Judea. How vast the responsibility that rests upon Britain! Let us remember that privileges misimproved lead to their removal, and that if we forsake our first love, our gospel candlestick will be removed.

Many, we are reminded in the psalm before us, have been the enemies, both temporal and spiritual, which have assailed the Zion of the living God; but as it has been in past times, so it will be in time to come. When the powers of the world make war with him whose throne is on mount Zion, 'the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful,' Rev. xvii. 14.

There is deduced from hence the duty of all who are impenitent. They must fear God—not servilely, but reverentially. How dreadful is his power who, in the twinkling of an eye, transformed an hundred and eighty-five thousand living beings into dead corpses! How awful to bear the fury of his wrath, as every impenitent sinner does! 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' There is a duty mentioned incumbent upon all who fear God. It is to confide in him—to pay their vows to him—to take the Lord Jesus Christ to reign over them, without a rival, and to 'present their bodies, and souls, and spirits, living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God, which is their reasonable service.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art great and greatly to be feared, —thou art good, and greatly to be loved, and to be had in reverence of all that would approach unto thee. Thou art the blessed and the

sely potentate, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; mercy and truth continually go before thy face. Thou rulest in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. Thou causest the very wrath of man to praise thee, and the remainder of that wrath thou dost restrain. Lord, may we have just and worthy conceptions of thy character and thy glory; and may we have grace given us to sanctify thee, the Lord God, in our hearts, and to make thee our fear and our dread. Give us thy Spirit at this time, that we may worship thee in spirit and in truth. We thank thee, O God, for our exceeding great and glorious privileges. We thank thee that thou art known in the midst of us and that we enjoy gospel privileges and gospel ordinances. We bless thee that our candlestick is not removed out of its place, but that our eyes still see our teachers, and that we live in these times of light and love, in which many kings, and prophets, and righteous men of old desired to live, but were not so highly favoured. Lord, may we prize our privileges; may we improve them aright, and may they be to us the savour of life unto life. We thank thee for the opportunity which we had this day of waiting upon thee in thy public courts, and O let the preaching of the everlasting gospel be accompanied with divine efficacy and saving power. Let the Spirit of God apply the truth to every heart. God forbid that thy ministering servants should have to take up the lamentation of the prophet of old, Who hath believed our report! and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed! But O make bare thy holy arm, and visit us with that mercy and love which thou bearest to thine own people. May we pay our vows to the Most High. May we devote ourselves to thy service, and may we offer up our bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to thee, which is our reasonable service. Prepare us, O Lord, for all that lies before us in time, prepare us for death, judgment and eternity, and may we be received at length unto thy everlasting kingdom and glory. Send forth thy light and thy truth among the nations, and let them acknowledge that thou art he whose name alone is Jehovah, the Most High over all the earth. Bring in thine ancient people the Jews, with all the fullness of the Gentile church. Bless our country, our queen, and all placed in authority over us; and enable us to lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty. Be the God of this family. Let every member of it be a member of the spiritual body of Jesus Christ; interested in the eternal

covenant, washed in the blood of sprinkling, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit of promise. Take us under thy divine care this night. Let no evil come near us, nor plague come nigh our dwelling. Fit us, O God, for the active duties of the week on which we have entered; support us under its trials and difficulties, and with every temptation graciously make a way of escape. We commend ourselves to thee, and to the power of thy grace, who art able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all those that are sanctified. Hear us in heaven, thy dwelling-place, and when thou hearest, forgive. O grant us an answer in peace, for all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 57—60.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS III.

REMARKS.

'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness;' and though, at first sight, the chapter which we have been reading may seem to suggest little in the way of practical remark or instruction, a slight degree of attention will show that it is not without its salutary lessons. The character of Jehoram, to whom it chiefly relates, has many imitators still. He 'put away the image of Baal that his father had made,' in all probability, in order to conciliate Jehoshaphat, and obtain his aid against the rebellious king of Moab, while he still was idolatrous in heart, 'cleaving to the sins of Jeroboam.' And so, many are to be found in the present day, who, for the sake of gaining some worldly end, or securing the friendship of some individual whose influence may help to advance their worldly schemes, will, for a time, give up their sinful habits, and put on the aspect of reformed characters. In their straits and difficulties, they are ready too, like Jehoram, to take counsel of those whom in their season of peace and prosperity they affected to despise. If affliction, or temporal calamity, come upon them, the man of God, or the minister of the gospel, whose instructions they were wont to slight or sneer at, is then sought for; and impressed with the idea, for the moment at least, that the 'prayer of a righteous man availeth much,' while his admonitions and even reproofs for past follies are not resented, his supplications at a throne of grace are desired and entreated. But alas! all these interested movements are speedily discovered to be fitful and passing. When the worldly end is secured, when the affliction has been soothed by time, when the worldly calamity has been alleviated by some better fortune, the work of reformation ceases; the idols that were laid aside are again set up, the prayers that were apparently welcomed, are disrelished, and the counsels

and reproofs of the spiritual watchman are felt to be repulsive and distasteful. O! men may serve some temporal benefit by their partial relinquishment of sin, even as Jehoram did, but nothing better than this can ever result from it; and unless, through the grace of God, such a change be wrought upon their hearts, as will make them willing to part with every idol, not merely to lay aside one sin, but every sin; and to submit wholly and cordially to divine teaching, however successful they may be in the prosecution of their worldly schemes, they cannot have any rational ground on which to look for a happier destiny hereafter than that which awaits the idolator; they 'shall not enter into the kingdom of God.'

PRAYER.

O God, the creator, preserver, and redeemer of the world, thou art entitled to the worship of all thine intelligent creatures. It is thy righteous and inalienable prerogative, to demand and to receive the homage of their adoration and praise. With all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our strength we are bound to love and serve thee. As the God that made us, thou mayest well call for the devotion of all our faculties to thy service. As the God that hast led us and fed us all our life long, thou mayest well claim the continued gratitude of our existence. As the God who didst provide a ransom for us in the sacrifice of thy dear Son, when we had sold ourselves to sin and satan, and when no man could redeem his brother from destruction, thou mayest well say to us, Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are his. We acknowledge, O Lord, that these claims have not been met as they ought to have been; that instead of honouring thee by a ready submission of our minds to thine authority, and a free and full opening of our hearts to the influences of thy love, we have disobeyed that authority, and slighted that love; we have served idols instead of the living God; we have taken counsel of our own hearts, instead of listening to the voice of heavenly truth. Forbid it, O Father of mercies, that we should continue thus to dishonour thee, and degrade ourselves. Convinced that thy glory and our own happiness, demand the separation of our hearts from every idol, may we be enabled, by thy gracious Spirit, to yield ourselves as living sacrifices to thee. Our past idolatries and sins remember not against us, for Jesus' sake, and impart to us strength to serve thee aright for the time to come. When thou sayest unto each of us, My son, my daughter, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways, may we be enabled cordially and fully to meet these demands.

May we never think of offering thee a divided heart, which is faulty in thy sight, but sincerely, cheerfully, and wholly may we give ourselves unto the Lord. This day, in entering anew upon the active duties of the world, may we be guided by thy counsel, upheld by thy power, and enriched by thy blessing. May the rest and the refreshment afforded to our bodies and our spirits on thy sabbath, make us strong to do thy will through the week. In all things, in the discharge of every secular as well as of every sacred duty, may we be able to acquit ourselves as the true servants of Jehovah; and may no earthly consideration ever move us away from that path of holy obedience which has been plainly set before us. May we be faithful unto death, that we may obtain the crown of life. We bless thee for all the sacred and civil privileges which we possess. Let not our unworthiness provoke thee to take them away. In thy mercy, do thou purify and sustain them for our benefit, and the benefit of the generations that are to come after. Our country, our sovereign, our church, do thou greatly prosper, so that glory in our land may have its habitation. Keep us, with all near and dear to us, from evil this day; and in whatever duties we are engaged, or to whatever trials we may be subjected, may we receive from thee guidance, fortitude, and comfort; for all we ask is for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 29—31.

SCRIPTURE—Acts v.

REMARKS.

We have here, in the history of Ananias and Sapphira, not only a new illustration of what men will do, even under the guise of religion, to obtain a sinful gratification, but a most striking and awful testimony of God's indignation at such hypocrisy and deceit. Actuated by a desire to share in that high reputation in which those persons were held, who, in apostolic times, voluntarily and cheerfully sold their property, and cast the price into a treasury for the common benefit of the Christian disciples, 'Ananias and Sapphira his wife,' we are told, 'sold a possession.' But while they obviously wished it to be understood that they had, like others, devoted the whole price of it to Christian objects, and sought the gratification of credit and a name for such a sacrifice, they still reserved a part for themselves, regardless of truth, and setting at nought the idea of detection. Thus, though for the sake of a little paltry fame they were willing to render a considerable offering, yet their avarice being as strong as

their love of praise, they secretly kept back what they wished it to be believed they had given, and so were guilty of an attempt to impose upon the apostles; guilty of hypocrisy, aggravated by the circumstance, that those on whom they attempted to practise it, acted under the guidance of God's holy Spirit, and thus it is, that their crime is called 'lying unto the Holy Ghost,' inasmuch as they endeavoured to deceive persons who were known by them, to be under his special influence. Swiftly did the vengeance of heaven overtake them. God saw, with an indignant eye, their wickedness, and as a testimony that he will not be mocked with impunity, he smote them, the one after the other, so that they 'gave up the ghost.' What a lesson have we here against hypocrisy and deceit, especially in matters of a sacred character! Let us remember that we cannot impose on God; that no veil we can cast over our thoughts or actions, can screen them from his eye; and that however we may escape the detection and censure of our fellow-men, we never can escape God's righteous judgment. Let us strive, therefore, to be 'sincere and without rebuke,' in our religious profession, being always on the alert against the influence of dispositions that lead to hypocrisy, especially those that operated so fatally on Ananias and Sapphira; viz. the love of praise, and the love of money.

While God, by a miraculous power, interposed to punish a daring attempt to impose upon the apostles, by a similar power he afforded them protection and success amid the open insults and hostility of their enemies. The persecuting violence manifested in the imprisonment of the apostles, God over-ruled for the advancement of the gospel, miraculously opening the prison doors and setting them free; thereby not only imparting to them new courage to face all dangers, but begetting a feeling among the people in their behalf; and from one unlooked for quarter, even from Gamaliel, a pharisee, actuated by mere worldly policy, extorting an argument for their toleration, so that they were 'daily in the temple, and in every house, ceasing not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.' Let the encouraging fact be ever before us, that the same presiding agency, though not disclosed exactly in the same way, is still controlling the passions of men for the furtherance of the cause of truth. Yes, 'the Lord's arm is not shortened;' and neither to the church as a body, nor to its individual members, shall the enmity of men be permitted to extend, farther than to his wisdom seems proper. The wrath of man he maketh to praise him. 'the remainder of his wrath he restraineth.' The gospel must triumph. It is the counsel of God, and cannot 'come to nought.' If its enemies will not be won into its obedience; if they will continue to 'fight against God,' they must 'be broken as with a rod of iron. O that they would 'kiss the Son lest he be angry, and they perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art a holy and a heart-searching God. All things are naked and open to thine eye, the most secret thoughts and emotions of

our souls being as thoroughly before it as any of the actions of our outward man. Thou seest not only our outgoing, and our incoming, our down-sitting, and our uprising, but also the plans and purposes which we meditate. Our thoughts thou understandest afar off; our secret sins are in the light of thy countenance. And when we think, that not a day, not an hour, of our lives passes away, without something occurring in our thoughts, our affections, or our conduct, that has upon it the stain of sin, something that is opposed to the purity of thy nature, and liable, therefore, to thy wrath; something observed by thee, if not by ourselves, insulting to thy holiness, and fitted to provoke thine indignation against us; O what reason have we to thank thee, that we have not, long ere now, been cut off from the land of the living, and the place of hope; how grateful ought we to be, that we are not left to the misery and despair, in which a sense of our guilt, without a knowledge of the way of salvation, would involve us; and how anxious ought we to be to use the means, and improve the opportunities of deliverance from the punishment we deserve. Grant then, O gracious God, that while we are convinced of our guilt and danger, while our shortcomings, and our backslidings reprove us, we may cast ourselves upon that Saviour who welcomes every weary and heavy-laden sinner; and finding in him rest from every fear, deliverance from every perplexity, comfort in every sorrow, victory over every enemy, may we cleave to him continually, may we abide in him for ever. May we be made complete in him, growing up to the stature of perfect individuals, being washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. May we be duly affected by the solemn facts which we have heard this evening from thy holy word; may we never forget, that it is impossible to conceal from thee the state of our hearts or our conduct, and that hypocrisy, both in sacred and in common things, must always be displeasing in thy sight. Through thy grace may we be kept from deceiving ourselves, and from deceiving others; being made pure in heart, and free from all appearance of evil. Like thy servants of old, may we manifest the reality of our Christian profession, by a steadfast adherence to the prescribed path of duty; and though, like them, we may be reviled and evil-entreated for the gospel's sake, may we be faithful to our heavenly Master, and ready to make any sacrifice, rather than shrink from the service he requires of us; yea, may we rejoice if we are counted worthy to suffer shame

for his name. Hasten, O Lord, the time when the religion of the cross shall overcome every obstruction; when every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places smooth, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. Prosper every institution having for its object the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. Bless the church planted in our own land. May she be as a well-watered garden, replenished with trees of righteousness, that thou mayest be glorified. Make all her ministers faithful, her elders exemplary and active in their labours of love; and the whole body of her members true witnesses for Christ. Bless the young; turn their hearts from vanity and sin, to the love of thyself. Dwell in this family, and impart to all belonging to it wisdom and holiness, and the fear of the Lord. Visit in mercy the habitations of trouble and affliction. O give the needful consolation, and let not sorrow work death, but sanctification, and eternal life. Hear the cry of the needy, the orphan, the widow, and the stranger. Prepare the dying for death; and as we feel our days and years to pass swiftly away, may we feel more and more the importance of preparing to meet our God. O when the hour of meeting shall arrive, may we be ready to render our account with joy, and not with grief. Our bodies, our souls, and all that concerns us, we would now commit to thy keeping for this night and for ever; looking for thy mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, one eternal God, we would ascribe honour and glory, dominion and praise, now, and for evermore. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXXIII. 1, 3, 4.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS IV.

REMARKS.

This chapter is full of useful instruction, suggesting many lessons applicable to the circumstances in which believers are often situated. The first incident which it records is a very interesting one. The widow of one of the 'sons of the prophets,' is left in worldly destitution, and a man to whom she is indebted, threatens to sell her sons as slaves, in order to obtain payment of the debt. Here is a case of great distress, which no good man, and far less a prophet, could behold unmoved. We wonder not, therefore, that Elisha should say to the widow, 'what shall I do for thee?' nor, when we consider, that the honour of religion demanded satisfaction to the

creditor of a deceased prophet, need we deem it an extraordinary thing that Elisha should be miraculously instructed how to provide, at once for cancelling the debt, and sustaining the family. Miracles are not now, however, to be expected under similar circumstances. Christian sympathy and kindness must supply their place. And while it is the duty of every believer to live within his means; to 'owe no man any thing;' that the gospel be not dishonoured by his carelessness or improvidence, yet, when a man that 'fears the Lord,' is, through circumstances which he could not control, brought into difficulties, or his family left in poverty, there is, in such a case, a just claim for the interposition of Christian benevolence; and we shall be disregarding the evangelical command to bear one another's burdens, if we refuse to attend to that claim.

The history of the woman of Shunam reads to us two important lessons; viz. a lesson on contentment, and a lesson on resignation. When the prophet Elisha, out of gratitude for the kindness and hospitality shown him, as often as he came to the Shunammite's house, proposed to use his influence with those in power to procure for her some benefit, saying, 'What is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?' she answered, 'I dwell among mine own people;' as if she had said, 'I am satisfied with my present lot;' I desire not any greater worldly enjoyment than that which I possess, in the interchange of friendship and affection with my own people. What a noble instance of indifference to temporal honour and advancement have we here! What wisdom and fortitude in cleaving to her present comfortable condition, when the offer of exaltation was before her! How strikingly does her example inculcate the wisdom of refusing to risk the loss of present tranquillity and happiness, by giving way to any tempting call to worldly advancement that may present itself. Let us be guided by that wisdom which speaks to us in the language of Jeremiah to Baruch, 'Seekest thou great things unto thyself? seek them not.' But the Shunammite exhibited also a striking instance of resignation to the divine will, under a most trying event. She had unexpectedly received a son, on whom, after having grown up to youth, the hand of death was suddenly fixed. A sore bereavement surely this; few more distressing can be conceived. A son, an only son, a darling son cut off, while the bud of hope was just beginning to expand; 'a child of promise,' a child 'of prayer, and given in love, yet taken away.' But still no repining word escaped from her lips; no murmuring thought she breathed. 'It shall be well,' 'it is well;' was her submissive language; the dictate of a mind disciplined to bear in patience heaven's sternest decree. And her resignation and confidence in God did not go unrewarded. She was one of those who 'by faith received their dead raised to life again;' and who, 'believing' in the wisdom, power, and love of God, were, through temporary suffering, permitted to 'see his glory,' and made to know that 'tribulation worketh patience, experience, and hope.' Let us never judge hastily the divine procedure towards us. Let us patiently submit to it as wise and

good, however severe it may seem; and let us pray and labour, that all our trials may have an improving influence upon our character here, and so prepare us for 'an exceeding weight of glory' hereafter. The interposition of Elisha in behalf of the sons of the prophets, whereby he not only miraculously healed their poisoned food, but multiplied the provision brought by the man of Baalshalisha, is calculated to speak comfort to the believer; to repress that anxiety which is ready to arise in his mind under temporal difficulty, and to encourage him to 'cast his care upon God.' 'The Lord will provide.' 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints. Thou hast done great things for us, of which we have reason to be glad. Thou hast been doing us good continually. Notwithstanding all our rebellion, and faithlessness, and ingratitude, thou hast never left thyself without a witness concerning us, for thou hast been filling our hearts with food and gladness; affording us provision and comfort, when we deserved destitution and misery. O may we be enabled by thy gracious Spirit, to look at all temporal blessing as among the things that are made sure to believers in Christ. May the thought that they come, and are continued to us by him, who, as Mediator, has control over all things, sweeten them to our taste, enhance them in our esteem, and make us satisfied with the portion of them assigned us. May we rejoice to believe that he will give us as much as is for our good, and that he will withhold what would prove injurious. Thus may we be instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry; both to abound, and to suffer need. In whatever state we are, therewith may we be content. We pray, heavenly Father, not only for a contented mind under the temporal provision afforded us, but for a spirit of holy submission under the various allotments of thy providence. May we be able, under every event, however trying, to stand in awe and not sin. We know that infallible wisdom and perfect rectitude, mark all thy determinations, and all thy ways. We know, that often after those very dispensations which we are ready to consider adverse, are fraught with the greatest blessings thou canst bestow; and that all thy dealings towards thy people, shall conduce to their eternal welfare. May we then, under the afflictions that befall us, instead of saying with Jacob, All these things are against me; be able to say, with the Shunammite, It is well, it shall be well. And though trouble and

affliction in their most trying forms should anoint us, may none of these things move us. May we be strong in faith, giving glory to God, from the greatest depths of sorrow. May we still retain an unwavering confidence in him who has said, I will never leave you, I will never forsake you. May we be enabled to lift our Ebenezer, and say, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us, and he will help us still; who remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever; and hath redeemed us from our enemies, for his mercy endureth for ever; who giveth food to all flesh, for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven, for his mercy endureth for ever. Bless us, and all for whom we ought to pray; high and low, rich and poor, young and old. Bless Zion; may she prosper. May her ministers be faithful and successful. May the whole body of her members be pure, so that her very enemies may be constrained to say, The Lord is here. May true religion flourish in this house, and in this parish; and may thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven; for all we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXIII.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS VI.

REMARKS.

1. How soon did a spirit of jealousy and discontent, arising from the management of its secular concerns, appear in the Christian church! It was scarcely formed, when complaints were heard about a partial and unfair distribution of the common fund. Need we wonder, then, that murmurings and contents should still be found in the church? If, even under the superintendence of the apostles, one party alleged that they were treated with neglect, to the advantage of another, can we expect that now there should be no similar complaints—no similar charges of partiality and mismanagement? We cannot. Human nature is essentially so selfish, that in every thing that concerns their worldly interests, embers of jealousy will be found smouldering in the hearts of one party of Christians towards another; and thus it is, that we oftener hear murmurings in reference to the temporal concerns of the church, than to its spiritual concerns. Whenever there is good reason for such murmurings, whenever there are abuses or mismanagement that justify complaint, it would be well if the course adopted by the apostles, as recorded in the chapter just read, were followed; it would be well if such concessions and remedies were prayerfully employed, as to give hopeful security against a recurrence of similar causes of discontent. If this were the case, we might expect to

see as the result, the removal of many prejudices, the destruction of schisms, and envyings, and strifes, and an increase of the number of faithful adherents of the truth.

2. How necessary is it for men who take up the cause of religion, to guard against confounding impure passion with holy zeal! The Jews, who, when they 'were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which Stephen spake, suborned men' to bring false charges against him, and 'stirred up the people against him,' no doubt imagined that they were actuated by a proper zeal, and were doing God service, though, it is obvious, they were instigated by a 'zeal without knowledge;' a dark and malignant passion, utterly inconsistent with the cause of God, in which they professed to be engaged. And how ready are men still to support what they consider to be a good cause by unworthy means; to fight their opponents, not with the polished weapons of truth, but with arrows dipt in the gall of human prejudice, and human passion, to supply their lack of argument by personal reviling and abuse; and then to conclude, that they have all the while been guided by a hallowed anxiety for the cause of God! Let us not mistake; a holy zeal for God will despise such methods of contending. It will strive with all energy, nay, with vehemence; but it will reject from its alliance all deceit, all malice. It will not wrangle, but persuade; it will not persecute, but entreat; it will not curse, but bless. Benevolence, not selfishness, directs it. The Spirit of God, and not the spirit of evil, urges it on; and, therefore, it will ever be characterized by charity, by honesty, and by long-suffering. Let us guard against imagining that our zeal is holy, if it be destitute of such properties as these.

PRAYER.

Ever-blessed and most merciful God, who, in former times, didst show thyself mighty to bring good out of evil, order out of confusion, and light out of darkness; over-ruling contention within, as well as opposition without, the church, and ordering events so as to secure her welfare, and thine own glory, we would be encouraged by thy past procedure, to ask thee to interpose in these days, and by thy counsel, and thy power, imparted to those who are appointed watchmen over the spiritual interests of thy people, enable them to remove all errors in government, doctrine, and discipline, and so to purify thy church, as that all just cause for complaining shall be taken away, and the professed members of Christ, her living Head, shall be joined together in love, and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. In us, as belonging to the number, do thou destroy all the elements of strife, and imbue our minds with that spirit of Christian charity which will lead us to beware giving needless offence to any, to be deeply concerned for the welfare of immortal souls, and to do good to all as we have opportunity. Putting

away from us all bitterness, and wrath, and envy, and clamour, and evil-speaking, may we be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us; and while we are called upon earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, to be valiant for the truth upon the earth; may our zeal ever be guided by knowledge, animated by love, and free from all unholy passion. May we never dishonour thy cause, or our own profession, by the exhibition of violence or deceit; but in all things approve ourselves as the servants of God, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, and by the power of God. In the spirit of love and zeal, we pray that thou wouldest visit the habitations of cruelty and sin with thy mercy. Let the light of the gospel, and the peace thereof, speedily spread over all lands. At home and abroad, let the people, yea, all the people praise thee. Let Jew and Gentile, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, be brought together within the fold of thy church, and one universal acclaim of gratitude ascend to thee from every people and every clime. This house do thou fill with thy blessing. This parish do thou water with the dews of thy grace. This land, do thou make a land of righteousness and peace. O hear these humble supplications, and while we cast our care upon thee, cast thou over us thy protection and thy grace, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 12.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS V.

REMARKS.

Man at his best estate is altogether vanity. Naaman, captain of the Syrian host, high in the favour of his prince, honoured as, under God, the deliverer of his country, was yet covered with a loathsome disease. Amidst all the distinctions of rank and wealth, man is born unto trouble: he is of few days and full of sorrow. In the means taken for Naaman's recovery we see how wonderfully events are ordered by God in his providence, so as to lead us by a way which we know not. A band went forth from Syria intent only on plundering the land of Israel,—a little maid was carried captive from her parents and home,—her simple report of Elisha's miraculous gifts reached the ears of her master, and brought him, the bearer of a royal letter, to stand as a suppliant at the prophet's gate. Thus does God, who is wonderful in counsel, carry out his purposes

of mercy in behalf of sinners. These things will he do unto them, and not forsake them.

The simple message of Elisha, 'Go, wash and be clean,'—Naaman's haughty reply, 'Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?'—his subsequent humility and thankful acceptance of what he had previously rejected as foolishness,—all vividly represent the sinner's spiritual wants, the movements of an unhumiliated heart, and the blessed effects of that repentance unto life which needeth not to be repented of. The disease of leprosy, which prevailed in the east, and producing the most painful effects on its miserable victims, was a striking emblem of our spiritual malady; while, in the cleansing efficacy communicated to the waters of Jordan, we are reminded of that fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness. By nature we are suffering under a deep spiritual disease; the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint; but let us rejoice that there is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there. Let it be our prayer, with David, 'wash us thoroughly from our transgression, and cleanse us from our sin,' and let us come to the blood of Jesus, that our consciences may be purified from dead works, to serve the living God.

Naaman's disease was not only healed; he was led openly to turn from his idols. 'Behold,' he said, 'now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.' This good confession, before many witnesses, was followed by his requesting two mule's burden of earth, and permission to bow in the house of Rimmon. The former of these might proceed from a desire to retain some outward memorial of that land where he had experienced so signal a deliverance; the second shows how hardly they that have riches can enter into the kingdom of God. There is an obvious desire to serve God and mammon. Conscience, however, was roused, and the prophet, who evidently leaves the principles already implanted to work their own way, knew, that he who had begun the good work; would carry it on even unto the end. It becomes the followers of Christ openly to throw themselves on the Lord's side; to acknowledge him before men, being not ashamed of the gospel, which is the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.

How solemn is the lesson taught by the punishment of Gehazi. Its severity is but a foretaste of that righteous vengeance which shall consign to outer darkness whatsoever loveth or maketh a lie. This deceiver had enjoyed the instructions and example of Elisha, but amidst all these privileges his covetous heart remained unregenerated. How important, therefore, must be the effectual working of God's mighty power, by which alone we can be renewed in the spirit of our minds? On his grace let us place all our dependence, that he may work in us both to will and do of his good pleasure, and that, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art our God, early would we seek thee. Enable us this morning humbly to approach thy footstool, and give unto thee the glory which is due unto thy name. We adore thee as Lord of heaven and earth, the Fountain of all excellence and blessedness; glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, ever doing wonders. Whom have we in heaven but thee? there is none on earth whom our souls would desire besides thee. With shame and confusion of face we would confess our sins in thy presence. O thou who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, enter not into judgment with us, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified. Reveal to us, we beseech thee, the exceeding sinfulness of our sins, the guilt and danger of that spiritual disease which has prevailed within us. May we see the corruption of our hearts, and mourn with godly sorrow over the transgressions of our lives. We have sinned, and what shall we answer thee, O thou preserver of men. Like the leper of old, it becomes us to cry out, Unclean, unclean. The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in us. Our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. But we desire to take encouragement from the assurance that there is a balm in Gilead, and a Physician there. Blessed be thou, O God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who didst look with pity on our low and lost estate, and didst, in the exercise of sovereign mercy, set forth thy Son to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in his blood. O apply to our souls this blood of sprinkling. Wash us in the fountain thus opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness. Blot out our iniquities as a cloud, our transgressions as a thick cloud. Have mercy on us for thy great name's sake. Heal our backslidings, and love us freely. Wash us and we shall be clean, purge us with hyssop and we shall be whiter than the snow. And, O Lord, we beseech thee for the gift of thy Holy Spirit. May his quickening and sanctifying influences be shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ, to awake a deeper sense of sin's exceeding sinfulness, to fill us with enlarged apprehensions of redeeming love, and enable us to adorn our profession by a life and conversation becoming the gospel. Forbid that our affections should cleave to the dust, or that we should even offer thee the homage of a divided heart, seeing that we are not our own, but bought with a price. May we live no more unto ourselves, but unto him who died

for us. Being made free from sin, may we be indeed the servants of God, having our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. To thy grace would we this day commend ourselves and all whom we ought to remember before thee. Look in mercy on a world lying in wickedness. Excite every where a growing zeal in the cause of Christ, and hasten the happy time when all men shall know thee, and call thee blessed. Bless those united to us in the ties of relationship or friendship. May grace and mercy and peace be multiplied upon them. Be with us through the day, to strengthen us for its various duties. Whatsoever our hand findeth to do, may we do it with all our might. Order our footsteps in thy word, and suffer no iniquity to have the dominion over us. Hear these our prayers, and accept of us, for Christ sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 4.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS VII. 1—29.

REMARKS.

As false witnesses rose up against our Lord, so were they now sought against his disciples. Stephen stood accused before the Jewish synagogue of speaking blasphemous things against the holy place and the law. His object in reply was not merely to show the falsehood of such a charge, but to warn his judges against superstitiously cleaving to forms, while they rejected the Messiah, and convict them of concealing, under the semblance of religious zeal, a wrathful, ungodly, persecuting spirit. The narrative, accordingly, on which he enters was fitted to arrest their attention, and disarm their prejudice. Instead of hatred to Jewish institutions or the events of Jewish history, this convert to Christianity was heard recounting, with deep interest, the long train of God's dealings with his ancient people. The calling of Abraham, the covenant of circumcision, the history of the patriarchs, the oppression of Egypt, the birth of Moses, his education and learning, his rejection by the Israelites, and finally his flight into Midian, are all vividly placed before us; nor could the most bigoted of his adversaries have avowed a firmer belief, or evinced a deeper interest in these wonderful events. Every statement also contributed, step by step, to gain the purpose which Stephen had in view. When he spake of Abraham, as distinguished by the marks of God's favour previous to the covenant of circumcision, the inference was obvious, that such external rites could not be in all circumstances essential. When he exhibited the father of the faithful without home or kindred, a stranger amidst the land of promise, his hearers might have been prepared to believe, that amidst all its outward persecutions, the church of Christ might still be the depository of sacred truth. Above all, in the present circumstances of the

synagogue there was a solemn warning drawn from the history of Moses. That prophet, whose name they professed to revere, had been disowned by their fathers,—his efforts for their deliverance rejected,—and he himself driven to seek refuge in flight. Thus had their nation, in times past, dishonoured the bearers of a divine commission. It was no new thing for them to fight against God.

In these statements Stephen has left an example to believers in every future age. As he, being full of the Holy Ghost, appealed to the authority of scripture, so are we to seek the Spirit's promised aid, and to rest all our confidence on the word of God. When called to assign a reason for the hope that is in us, let us strive to imitate the calmness and boldness, the faithfulness and spiritual wisdom of this address. Looking to Jesus as the Captain of our salvation, let us rely on his gracious assurance, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' Amidst all the difficulties of the Christian course, let us keep the faith once delivered to the saints. More is he who is for us, than all who can be against us. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass; he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.

The events of Old Testament history can never lose their interest, or be divested of their importance in the view of the Christian. Who can follow the long train of God's dealings as there unfolded, without feeling that he has indeed been the dwelling-place of his people in all generations? From the calling of Abraham down to the sending forth of Moses, we see many proofs of undeserved mercy, long-suffering patience, unchanging faithfulness. Now these things happened unto them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come. The God with whom we have to do is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. He who blessed faithful Abraham has many precious promises in store for Abraham's spiritual seed. He who was the Shepherd of Israel, who led Joseph as a flock, leadeth his people beside the still waters, and maketh them to lie down in the green pastures. Let us seek, therefore, the heritage of those that fear his name, that we may see the good of his chosen, and may glory with his inheritance. Let it be our prayer, with the Psalmist, 'remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people; O visit me with thy salvation.'

PRAYER.

O thou who dwellest in the high and holy place, we bless thee that thine ear is open to the cry of the humble; that though thou inhabitest eternity and its praises, yet to this man wilt thou look, who is poor and of a contrite heart, and who trembleth at thy word. Enable us, gracious God, in humble reliance on the merits of our Redeemer, to approach thee as children comin to a Father, and fulfil in our experience thir own blessed promise, that wherever two or thr are met together in thy name, thou wilt be pr

sent with them, to bless them and to do them good. We thank thee, O Lord, for all that we are taught of thy dealings with thine ancient people. As we have heard with our ears what things thou didst in their days, in the times of old, O may these manifestations of thy purposes and character produce a deep and saving impression on our souls. Thou who art the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom can we go but unto thee? Throughout all generations thy name and memorial has been, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin. Enable us, we entreat thee, to rely on thine unfailing mercy and unchanging faithfulness. God of our fathers! who keepest covenant and mercy with them that love thee, O be thou our refuge and our dwelling-place. Enable us from the heart to say, This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death. Deepen, we entreat thee, on our minds a sense of our exceeding sinfulness, and while our iniquities are felt as a heavy burden, may we look to him who died upon the cross to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. We bless thee that the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men; and while we rely on thy mercy in Christ Jesus, we pray to be kept faithful to our Redeemer and our Lord. In all circumstances of difficulty and trial may we be enabled to avow our attachment to his cause, and by the growing holiness of our lives, may men have reason to take knowledge respecting us that we have been with Jesus. May his words, which are spirit and life, dwell in us richly in all wisdom, and may the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, given to us abundantly. Thou knowest, O Lord, our weaknesses and wants, but we entreat thee to supply all our need out of the fulness which is in Christ. Restrain our corruptions, strengthen our desires after holiness, and teach us effectually to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. Fill us with the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, that these things being in us, and abounding, we may neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thou, O Lord, art our refuge and our strength. Never leave us and never forsake us. May we be led for ever in the paths of righteousness, and kept by thy mighty power through faith unto salvation. Remember, we entreat thee, in mercy our brethren of mankind. Look with compassion on the guilty and the perishing. Where sin hath abounded, may grace much more abound; and

let all the ends of the earth see the salvation of our God. Be very gracious to all who are near and dear to us. Lord, bless them and keep them; may they walk in the light of thy countenance, and dwell in safety under the shadow of thy wings. Accept, gracious God, of our humble thanks for thy goodness through the day. We bless thee for that care which has again made the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice; and we pray for a deeper sense of our ever-increasing obligations to thee, the God of our lives. To thy care we commit ourselves during the night. Thou who keepest Israel, who slumberest not nor sleepest, be thou at our right hand, and we shall not be greatly moved. Encompass us with thy favour as with a shield, and be our portion for ever. And all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXVII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS VI.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—7. The sons of the prophets nad, doubtless, profited by the godly converse of Elisha, and knew the value of his company. They were convinced that his presence among them, even in the humble work of enlarging their dwelling, would be for their comfort, and speed on their business. It never hinders our work that we have committed it to God, or have men of God in our company. It was a small matter of loss when the axe head fell from the helve, but a cause of great distress to the poor borrower, who appears to have been unable to repay its value to the lender. The Lord, by condescending to work a miracle in this case, not only put honour on his servant, but has taught us to remember, that he regards our distresses however trifling, and is ready to help us.

Ver. 8—23. The blindness of the unbelieving heart is truly astonishing. If the king of Syria believed that Elisha could repeat to the king of Israel words uttered in secret at a distance, and so enable him to avoid the best concealed plots of the enemy, surely he might have been convinced that this wondrous prophet could with equal ease discover every plot against himself, and defeat it. If the prophet's servant had considered how marvellous were the communications of God to his master, he would not have fainted at the sight of the Syrians. And who can tell what armies of angels guard us unseen? Doubtless but for such a means, the devil would often prevail against us. But God must open our blind eyes before we can rejoice in the truth 'that his angel encamps around them that fear him, and delivereth them.' They had need to have good weapons and great wisdom, who fight against the servants of God. At the moment they fancy themselves sure

of their prey, they may be treading on the borders of destruction. Blessed is it for them, that in the hour of their danger, they have God's Elishas to plead for them. Some throughout eternity will praise the Lord that they were interested in such an intercession.

Ver. 24—33. Sin will reduce a flourishing city to desolation, and the abuse of abundance will bring famine as a chastisement. They who riot in delicacies and think not of God, nor thank him for them, may come at last to fight for the meanest and most revolting food. Sin extinguishes maternal affection, nay, roots up maternal love from the breast. How true the word of God by Moses, that if Israel forsook the way of the law, the tender and delicate woman should be driven to feed on the infant she bore. Affliction unsanctified makes men mad. And Jehoram, under this influence, would have hurried on to murder like his father. He is desperate, but Elisha is calm and unalarmed. The king sees nothing but an empty barn floor and a dry wine vat; the prophet sees plenty at the doors. God's servants eat and are satisfied, while the servants of sin fast and are hungry. In his impiety, the king laid all the blame of Samaria's ruin on Elisha, nay, at the door of God himself. And judging that from God who sent the evil, nothing but evil would come, he, in the desperation of his impiety, determined to wait for God no longer. So do sinners mar the mercy of chastisement, and turn away from God. But blessed is the soul that waiteth for him, even in the way of his judgments.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we give thee thanks, through Jesus Christ, that we can come to thee as our gracious Father, reconciled to us by thy own dear Son, in whom thou art ever well pleased. We bless thee that we are permitted to cast all our care upon thee, for thou carest for us; and we would be encouraged, in our every distress, to apply to thee for help. When our dwelling is enlarged, and our family prospereth, we would most humbly acknowledge thee as the author of the mercy. In all our family, as well as our individual arrangements, help us to look to thee, that thou mayest direct our steps. O most gracious God, we would bow before thee in humility, and acknowledge thy kindness, in thus dealing so mercifully with poor rebels, such as we, who are continually liable to unbelief, and suspicions of thy love. Bring this root of sin to our conscience, and lead us to deplore it. Blot out its guilt in the blood of Jesus. Fulfil in us all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and a work of faith with power, that we may, as heirs of the righteousness of faith, triumph over our every sinful doubt, and joy in the comforting assurance that thou wilt never leave us, never forsake us. Blessed be thy name for the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. We confess that we owe our spared life and our every mercy to it. Blessed Lord, help us to wait on thee for enlarged

mercies, through this intercession. And let not the abundance of our mercies lead us to forget thee. We would deplore the earthliness of our desires, and the carnality of our hearts, which lead us so often to rest in thy gifts, while we forget thee, the giver; and in as much as we, as people, have so often in time past refused to acknowledge thy hand in our plenty, we confess that thou mightest most justly remove our plenty and smite us with famine, yea, send enemies upon us, and besiege us in all our gates. But we pray, that we may be forgiven, and that thou wouldst revive thy work in the midst of us. O destroy sin from our hearts; satisfy us with thy early mercy and then shall we be glad, and trust in thee. Let thy name be glorified throughout the world. Let a rich blessing of the Spirit be with the preacher of the gospel, till all the earth be filled with the knowledge of Jesus. Be with us throughout this day. Watch and guide us, and gather us around our family altar in the evening, to praise thee through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LIL. 1.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS VII. 30—60.

REMARKS.

Ver. 30—36. The Lord delays the deliverance of his people no longer than the set time. But their unbelief often protracts that delay. Forty years sooner might Israel have been set at liberty, but for unbelief. That sin had driven Moses away from his work, but he was chosen of God, and none could do the work but he. God marvellously brought him back to it, and just because he had entered into all the affliction of his people, sent a Redeemer whose word, and whose arm were irresistible. But he reproved their proud unbelief, by sending the very deliverer they had rejected.

Ver. 37—43. All the prophets bore witness to Jesus. Moses by word, by rites and ceremonies, and by faith pointed to him. As a notable type of the Mediator, he revealed the will of God, and organized the Jewish worship. And the people of Israel by rejecting his word, and turning to their idols, as well as Balaam, were but too remarkable types of the daring and impious Jews, who rejected Jesus, and took to their own vain imaginations. How the beasts offered in sacrifice, while Israel sojourned in the wilderness, and dwelt in Canaan, been any thing more than mere dead carcasses, that is, had faith looked through these victims to Jesus, then they had never turned to Moloch and Remphan. But unbelief, while it abuses the ordinances of worship, leads to corruption of them.

Ver. 44—50. The tabernacle was only a tabernacle of witness, because all its services testified of Jesus, the coming Mediator, and shadowed forth the

blessings of his grace; and this tabernacle being eventually removed, showed that Stephen had not blasphemed in declaring that God would remove and destroy the temple, nay, that he had declared God's truth. For as God needeth not a temple, seeing he filleth heaven and earth, and was at first worshipped without one, it was not strange that he should utterly abolish what was useless and unnecessary. These truths the intrepid martyr would have gone on to establish and illustrate. But he was approaching the point on which they alleged he held blasphemous doctrines, and their rising wrath, only gave him opportunity to administer a sharp rebuke.

Ver. 51—60. We may here discern the boldness of faith. Undaunted by his foes, unmoved by their rage, Stephen denounced them as obstinate unbelievers, who, utterly unwarned by the fearful punishment of their fathers, were irreclaimably wedded to the same sin of unbelief. They had crucified the Lord of glory, because they had shut their ears to the voice of the law, and the testimony of the prophets. And what now could be expected of these murderers, but deeds of blood? Long had the Holy Ghost striven with them, and borne patiently with their provoking unbelief. But as their fathers had resisted till wrath came beyond remedy, so would their children. Amid the gnashing of teeth, and the towering rage of gathering enemies, the eye of the martyr was lifted up to God. And not in vain. The heaven was opened to him, and a sight of its unutterable glory revealed. Thus was God gracious in supporting the faith of his servant. It was an assurance that his soul would soon be rejoicing with his Lord. He saw and believed. To him indeed the bitterness of death was passed. The visions of glory had burst on his astonished sight, and the songs of immortal happiness were already filling his enraptured ear. And awful though it was to be broken and crushed to death, yet, when once he had commended his soul to Jesus, and like his Lord, prayed for his murderers, he quietly submitted to the stroke, and fell asleep. The saint dies not. He falls asleep in Jesus. The grave is sweet to him. It is a bed of rest; and on the morning of the resurrection, Stephen will rise from it, not crushed and broken as he lay down, but radiant in all the beauty of holiness, and vigorous in immortal strength. They only die who die in unbelief. And they die indeed; without Christ, without God, without hope; the grave to them is but the passage to everlasting death. How wondrously does God hang one event of his providence upon another! The death of Stephen opens the way for the conversion of Saul. Rejoicing in his murder, this persecutor pounced on the flock, as a young lion whose lips have first tasted blood. But the dying voice of Stephen was ringing in his ears; the martyr's last prayer sunk deep into his heart; and that voice, and that prayer, doubtless clung to his memory, till the Lord turned him to take up the noble testimony of this first of martyrs, whose indefatigable zeal, and holy eloquence, might, if spared, have equalled in their precious fruits even the work of Paul, the apostle.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most blessed Jehovah, be pleas-

ed to grant us access into thy presence, through Jesus Christ the only Mediator. We adore thee as the Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer of thy people. Thou hast formed them for thyself, they shall show forth thy praise. The foe shall not exact upon them, nor the son of mischief wrong them longer than it pleaseth thee. Grant that we being enrolled among their number may have a right to their privileges. Visit us with the pardon of all our sins. Sprinkle clean water on us and we shall be clean. Cleanse us from all our idols and vain imaginations, and make us willing to follow the Lord Jesus as our example in all things. Bring our soul out of bondage that we may praise thy name. Thou art a Spirit, and art to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Grant us the aid of thy Holy Spirit in drawing near unto thee. May we constantly enjoy his grace, as a Spirit of supplications. And may all-directing power uphold us from mingling any impurity of our own, with thy holy worship. May the Spirit ever help us to remember, that thou art a jealous God, and canst condescend to hold communion with us sinners, only in the way of thine own appointment. And being emboldened by his might, let us bear a true testimony for thee. Let no rage of enemies, no fear of death, deter us from confessing Christ. Fill us with his spirit of devotedness to thee, and compassion to our enemies. Teach us so to live that we may at length fall asleep in Jesus. Blessed be thy name that he has made the grave a bed of rest to all his followers, and that he hath spoiled death of his sting. O may we find the grave a passage to glory, and rise at length with thy people to life everlasting. Help us to live to thee. Let our all be consecrated to thy service, and ready at thy call. Let Jesus be glorified in the spread of his truth. Revive and quicken us, O Lord, even for thy mercies' sake. Send forth thy light and thy truth in the midst of us. Turn, O speedily turn the multitudes of the careless to seek reconciliation and life from Jesus, our Lord; that our land being revived by life from on high, may send the knowledge of the Saviour to every corner of the earth. Let the kingdoms of this world speedily be ome the kingdoms of the Lord, and his Christ. O have mercy on the perishing sinners of the heathen, and extend thy compassion to blinded Israel. Our country and kindred, our friends in Jesus, and all our acquaintance, we commend to thy care. Watch us through the night. Refresh us with rest, and raise us invigorated for the duties of a new day, that we may ever live to thy glory. And glory shall be thine through everlasting ages, by Jesus Christ. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIII. 18—22.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS VII.

REMARKS.

In the close of the preceding chapter we read that Samaria had, on account of its sins, been visited with a famine of peculiar severity, and that its king instead of having been truly awakened to repentance, had plotted the death of Elisha, and afterwards, relenting of his bloody purpose, had, with extreme implety, murmured against the Lord as the author of the evil, and asserted the absurdity of hoping for any favour at his hands. It was not improbably in Elisha's presence, and in answer to Elisha's expostulation urging him to wait on Jehovah for deliverance, that he said, 'why should I wait for the Lord any longer?' And it is impossible not to observe how seasonably the riches of God's distrusted mercy were illustrated in the declaration which the prophet was commissioned instantly to give; the distinct promise of a speedy and most abundant supply, 'To-morrow about this time, shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel,' &c. It may not be unwarrantable to infer, from the circumstance of the king's not being said to have now uttered anything in reply, that he was speechless with astonishment at the unexpected rebuke which was administered to his despair, and that the reason why the attendant courtier, 'on whose hand the king leaned,' i. e. who was the highest in favour with his sovereign, (comp. 2 Kin. v. 18.) expressed himself in terms so contemptuous of the prophet's message, was his having reached a greater hardihood in unbelief and impiety than even the king himself. It is accordingly to him, as exhibiting the more daring specimen of unbelief, that our attention is now turned. For the interview between the king and the prophet, is ended by the latter's adding, to an assertion of Jehovah's promise, a denunciation of the nobleman's doom. Ver. 2. and the remainder of the chapter is occupied in relating the manner in which God's promise was fulfilled, and the nobleman's unbelief was punished.

According to human calculation, it would unquestionably seem that the nobleman was right, that into the thickly encompassed city no provisions could enter unless God should send them miraculously from above. But what things are impossible with men are possible with him who hath all the hearts of man and all the elements of nature under his control.

There were four lepers, who, by virtue of a particular statute (Lev. xiii. 46.) of the Mosaic law, (which the apostate and idolatrous Israelites were, for their own convenience, careful still to enforce), had their dwelling without the range of the other habitations, at the outside of one of the city's gates, suffering severely, perhaps because of their separated situation, more severely than the rest of the citizens, they resolved to cast themselves upon the mercy of the Syrians, thinking that they might be better and could not be worse. Ver. 4. 'If they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we die.' When, however, they with such singular

designs reached the Syrian camp, they found it utterly deserted, and the enemy fled; the cause was no less extraordinary than the discovery of the Syrians' disappearance. Ver. 6, 7. Just about the very time (comp. 5. and 7.) that the lepers were preparing to leave the city's gate, had there spread throughout the Syrian host an impression that they heard the noise as of a vast army rapidly approaching; concluding that this was some of Israel's powerful confederates brought to surprise them by a combined attack, they lost all confidence and fled without a moment's delay, so that when the lepers arrived at the outskirts of the camp, they had left it far behind. These after regaling themselves out of the profusion that was found in the hastily deserted tents, returned to the gate of the city, and by means of the only officers to whom they had access, communicated the tidings to the king. Ver. 10, 11. From his mind a timidity and suspicion of Syrian stratagem, which faith in Elisha's prediction might have prevented, had first to be removed by actual and skilful survey. Ver. 12—15. And the spoil of the hostile camp was brought into the city, and found a sufficient supply for the people's wants. Thus by the inscrutable providence of Jehovah directing the fears and feelings of the human heart, was the promise fulfilled. A glorious example to us that we never distrust his power; a glorious encouragement, that we may have confidence and assure our hearts, that notwithstanding all apparent difficulties, he will supply all his people's wants according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

The prophet's threatening was no less signally executed on the unbelieving nobleman. Ver. 17—20. While discharging the duty to which, on account of the high station he had been appointed, viz. 'to keep charge of the gate, i. e. to suppress any disorder that might arise from the impetuosity of the people, he was overwhelmed and killed by the pressure of the eager and inconsiderate crowd. Thus 'it fell out unto him,' as the prophet had foretold; 'he saw it with his eyes, but did not eat thereof.' A true and melancholy type of the final destruction of every unbeliever. For 'every eye shall see' the Saviour coming in his glory, (Rev. i. 7.) but how many without tasting of the blessedness which they did not believe that he could bestow, or that they refused to accept at his hands. How fearfully correct a verification of the denunciation, 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We bless thee for having revealed thyself as reconciling the world unto thyself in Christ Jesus, and for having invited and encouraged us to draw near to thee as our Father and our God. We have sinned and done iniquity in thy sight; we have sinned against the mercies of thy providence, the invitations and privileges of thy grace, the light and liberty and glory of the gospel day. What manner of love then, O Lord, is this, that thou shouldest still

be willing to pardon; that thou shouldest even now permit us to approach unto thy presence, and encourage us to pour out our souls in supplication, by the assurance that we have an advocate at thy right hand, and that whatsoever we ask in his name thou wilt not refuse to bestow. And what monstrous iniquity is this, that we should be distrustful of thy promises and of thy love, and hesitate to place our confidence and to seek our enjoyment in thee, the God of our salvation. Take then away from us the evil heart of unbelief. Remove the doubts and fears and all the enmity of our deceitful hearts. Enable us to behold thy glory in the face of Jesus, and then to discern the steadfastness of thy love and the fullness of thy promises. May we walk by faith on the Son of God, and thus be strengthened and purified to yield ourselves obedient to thy holy will, yea, even to yield our bodies a living sacrifice to thee, holy and acceptable, through Jesus Christ. Through this day to the light of which thou hast in thy mercy brought us, do thou guide and strengthen us by thy grace, that all which we do we may do to thy glory, that in all the duties and intercourse of life we may adorn the doctrine of our Lord and Saviour. Suffer not thy fear to depart from our hearts, and take not thy Holy Spirit away from us. Make us strong to resist all temptation, watchful and prayerful, that we do not enter into it. Sanctify us wholly, and keep us in soul, body, and spirit, unto the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. And all that we ask is for his sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LX. 1—4.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS VIII. 1—25.

REMARKS.

After Stephen's lifeless body had been left lying without the city, on the very spot where he had expired, some 'devout men,' i. e. foreign Jews, who, like the martyr, had believed in Christ, came and carried him away to burial, amidst severe lamentation and mourning. To this act, impressive testimony though it was against his murderers, the Jews seem to have made no opposition, because, perhaps, they did not feel themselves altogether secure against the interference of the Romans, who did not allow them to put any man to death, and because, at all events, (ver. 1.) there was at this time 'a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem,' and they found full occupation for their eager hands in searching out and harassing the surviving disciples. This was the first general persecution against the Chris-

tian church. Saul, the future apostle of the Gentiles, was at this time in Jerusalem, and with both great talents and great zeal directed to the interests of the pharisees, was not improbably one of the Cilicians who had disputed with Stephen, (chap. vi. 9.) as he certainly was one of the most cordial in afterwards pronouncing his death, and now one of the most conspicuous in carrying on the persecution. The immediate effect of the persecution was the dispersion of the believers, 'except,' as so expressly stated, 'except the apostles,' who, obedient to the Saviour's command, and confident in his protection, abode in Jerusalem. But the consequence of this dispersion was the more extensive propagation of the gospel; so that the persecution that sought the destruction of the church, contributed effectually to its increase and extension. Thus in the first, as in many subsequent persecutions, 'the Lord made the wrath of man to praise him.'

Of the many disciples who were scattered abroad preaching the gospel, the sacred writer particularizes one, whose ministry was abundantly successful, and was, besides, signalized by some extraordinary occurrences. This was Philip, one of the seven deacons, (see chap. vi.) he went to the city Samaria, which had probably, by reason of the strong antipathy still existing between its inhabitants and the Jews, (see John iv. 9.) been heretofore separated more than any town in Judea from the knowledge of the apostles' preaching; and by his doctrine, which they readily received, and by his miracles, to which they eagerly resorted, he diffused great joy through that city. There was at this time in Samaria, one Simon (commonly called Simon Magus), a sorcerer, who had obtained an immense influence over the people, and had come to be universally regarded among them as invested with divine power. But when Simon saw that the gospel made progress, that, notwithstanding the ascendancy which he had hitherto had, the people now gave heed to Philip, he adopted what seemed the most likely cause for the maintaining of his influence, joined the general movement, professed himself too to be a believer in Christ, and submitted to receive the ordinance of baptism. In the meantime the apostles heard that 'Samaria had received the word of God,' and as the power of conferring on others miraculous gifts was confined to them, they sent two of their number, viz. Peter and John, to confirm the Samaritan converts, and to impart to them the same gifts with which the Jewish believers had been endued. This was the occasion of Simon's displaying the hidden baseness of his soul, and helping to prove that baptism, even when administered by the hands of truly apostolic men, was not inseparably connected, far less identified, with the inward grace of which it is the sign. For 'when he saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands, the Holy Ghost was given,' so that miraculous gifts were conferred—for saving grace had been previously received by the Samaritan believers, and besides it is never said to have been communicated by the laying on of hands—'he offered them money' if they would impart to him the same power which themselves had, the power of enabling others to work miracles. Had the apostles been guided

by common worldly policy, they would have overlooked the impiety of this proposal, and upon any terms sought to secure his influence on their side. But animated by the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, and directed by the Spirit of truth, they rather faced all the danger that could arise from the opposition of one who was regarded as 'the great power of God.' Peter accordingly, in terms that might express the guiltiness of such a proposal, and the awful danger of an unconverted soul, reproved the sorcerer's hypocrisy, predicted his perdition, (ver. 20.) and exhorted him to repentance and prayer, as the only means by which his own doom might be averted, and his sins forgiven.

PRAYER.

Holy and ever blessed Father, we present ourselves before thee, in our Saviour's name, to bless thee for the mercies and the love with which thou hast crowned us this day, and to confess and mourn the many sins of which, in heart, and speech, and behaviour, we have been guilty. Our own hearts condemn us. How much more must we be condemned by thee, who art greater than our hearts, and knowest all things, knowest our most secret sins, and seest them to be more vile and abominable than we can fancy. Blessed be thy name, that there is hope concerning this, that there is forgiveness with thee, and plenteous redemption. O then that thou wouldst regard all our sins as borne by our Saviour in his own body on the tree, that thou wouldst regard us as separated for ever from their guilt, and as clothed with the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, and with the garments of his salvation. And to us, as united to the person of thy well-beloved Son, do thou show thy favour, and largely impart thy Spirit. Give us grace that we may perfect holiness in thy fear, and walk in that glorious liberty of thy children to which all thy people are advanced. To us, and to thy whole church and people, do thou overrule, as in times past, the dealings of thy providence for good, for the establishment of thy saints in faith and holiness, and for the enlargement and increase of thy kingdom. Remove all the darkness that rests upon the church's prospects, and all the unfaithfulness, and hypocrisy, and slothfulness that are to be found within her pale. Enable thy people to possess their hearts in confidence, that over all the distress and perplexity of nations, thou wilt bring in the glory of the latter days, and establish the kingdom that shall be given to the saints of the Most High. Bless our native land. Give all grace and true wisdom to our sovereign, to our rulers, and senators, that by thy favour we may be preserved from those sins that shall ruin, and those judgments that shall overtake so many

kingdoms of the earth. Bless abundantly the ministers of the everlasting gospel, especially those who have been sent forth to heathen lands; endow them with all strength and wisdom, and make them instrumental in hastening on the time when the dark places of the earth shall smile as the garden of the Lord. And now, O Lord, ourselves, and our friends, all our interests and cares, we would in faith and love commit to thee. Let thy hand be on us for good during this night, and let thy presence be with us during our whole lives, and let all our prayers be answered, according to thy riches in glory, by Christ Jesus. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXII. 25—28.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS VIII.

REMARKS.

In this chapter we have various narratives:

1. The Shunammite who, in a former part of Elisha's history, (see chap. iv.) had occupied a very honourable place, is again exhibited as the object of the especial love and careful providence of God. (vi. 6.) For, while a famine of unprecedented duration was about to be sent upon the still impenitent Israelites, she was forewarned by the prophet of the approaching calamity, and directed to seek a place of temporary sojourn beyond the limits within which it was to prevail, beyond the once smiling land of Israel. And when the seven years of its continuance were fulfilled, and she went in to the king to entreat the restoration of her possessions, that during her absence seem to have been usurped by others, providence had so ordered that the king was listening with somewhat changed disposition to Gehazi's recital of Elisha's miracles, and of that one miracle, in particular, of which she and her son were eminently the subjects. Her appearance at the very moment when the king's feelings were interested in her history, determined the success of her appeal; and thus it illustrates to all succeeding ages the minute care with which God watches the steps and directs the fortunes of his people. Nor let it be forgotten that the first mention which scripture makes of this highly favoured among women regards her kindness to the prophet, and that to this are referable all the blessing and the honour wherewith she was subsequently enriched. 'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward.'

2. From ver. 7—15. we read of the manner in which Hazael, according to a former announcement, ascended the throne of Syria, the inveterate enemy of Israel. Upon the occasion of Elisha's journeying to Damascus, Ben-hadad, who was at that time sick, sent to him, evidently through a superstitious awe of his mysterious power, inquiring, 'Shall I recover of this disease?' The prophet plainly foretold the

king's death, and also Hazael's exaltation to the throne, and his enormous wickedness against the children of Israel, ver. 12. Hazael, who knew but little of his own heart, expressed his detestation of the very idea of his doing 'this great thing,' and then, with a treachery and cruelty that have too often marked the friendships that are formed upon worldly interests, and cemented by worldly principles, went home, and after deceiving his royal master with a false account of the prophet's answer, coolly and basely murdered him—hastened his predicted death, and reigned in his stead.

3. We have an account of Jehoram's wicked reign over Judah, ver. 18—24. His wickedness is expressly ascribed to the connection that he formed with the house of Ahab, ver. 18. The influence of his father's godly example and pious counsel was utterly extinguished by the ill-chosen companionships of his youth. His sins, though they did not shake God's immutable promise, nor countervail his regard for 'David his servant,' (ver. 19.) were followed, if not with the destruction, at least with the diminution of his kingdom, and thus involved not himself only but his subjects also in this punishment, a memorable lesson to 'pray for kings and all that are in authority, that we under them may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and true honesty.'

4. He was succeeded by Ahaziah, his son, by whom the evil example of his father was too truly copied, and the baleful spirit of Ahab's house too truly imbibed, ver. 25—29. As he sinned, so he perished by reason of his connection and confederacy with that apostate and wicked family. For after uniting with them in unsuccessful war against Hazael, the king of Syria, he went down to visit his guilty friend and ally, who had been wounded in the battle, and was, along with him, smitten and slain by Jehu, (see next chapter.) 'Those who partake with sinners in their sins, must expect to partake with them also in their plagues.'—*Henry*.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, impress deeply upon our minds all the lessons of thy blessed word, that they may be profitable to us for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that our lives may be guided by thy law, and our hearts moulded by thy truth. Open thou our eyes that we may see the wonders of thy law, and that we may see the vileness of our own hearts. Turn away our eyes from viewing vanity, and keep us from listening to the counsel, and from joining in the company of the ungodly. May we set thee continually before us, and may thy fear ever abide in our hearts. Establish in us thy kingdom, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and enable us to be as living epistles of Christ Jesus, known and read of all men. O that we may walk worthy of our high calling as sons of God, and that we may have thy Holy Spirit abiding within us, the living witness of thy love,

the mighty agent of thy grace to our souls. We desire to remember before thee all our friends and relatives; all the children of affliction, both those that are thy children, and those that know not where true comfort is to be obtained. In thy love and mercy, O Lord, do thou pity and bless them with thy grace. Preserve the young from the snares of error and of sin. Enable their parents to keep in mind their solemn engagements to train up their offspring as the heirs of the promises, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Put into the hearts of all masters, and teachers, and governors, to watch for the souls of those who are committed to their charge, that they may approve themselves unto thee the Lord. Let judgment run down as a stream, and righteousness as a mighty river. May the voice of rejoicing and salvation be in every tabernacle. O Lord, incline thine ear and hear. O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O our God; for all our hope and confidence are in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 43—48.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS VIII. 26—40.

REMARKS.

Philip had formerly been led by the dealings of divine providence into Samaria, where his ministry was so marvellously blessed; and now, by a special message from God, communicated through the instrumentality of an angel, is he directed to what proved a scene of still more peculiar interest. Mark the firmness of Philip's faith, the readiness of his obedience. Though left ignorant of the reason of the command, and of the object for which he was sent, and only told of the place to which he was to go, viz. 'to the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza, which way 'is desert,' i. e. is through the wilderness of Judah, he hesitated not to 'arise and go,' and therein set before us an example that though we see not the propriety of a particular command, yet it is ours stedfastly to obey, assured that God will in due time vindicate his own wisdom, and reward our diligence in his service. For behold the speedy reward with which Philip's obedience is crowned.

It was provided in the Mosaic law that proselytes, or those of other nations who should join themselves to the Israelites, as the only worshippers of the true God, might have access to the temple services, and might acceptably observe the ordinances of Jehovah. Of these, one is here mentioned as having been at Jerusalem, (perhaps upon occasion of one of the great annual festivals,) and as now returning to his own country by the very road which Philip had been directed to take. Instructed anew by a

revelation of the Holy Ghost, Philip drew near to address himself to the unknown traveller, and found one whom, though by birth a stranger to the family of Israel, even the lips into which 'grace was poured' might have pronounced 'an Israelite indeed.' For zeal for the worship of God, which neither the distance of his country from the holy hill, nor the greatness of his worldly rank, nor the cares of his official station (ver. 27.) could countervail, was not the only grace by which his character was beautified. By the kindred, the no less essential feature, delight in the word of God, the existence of the divine life in his soul is unequivocally manifested; for while he travels homewards in his chariot, his vacant time (which, alas, in the case of many professing Christians, any thing rather than the Bible is allowed to occupy, because then any thing rather than an irksome task is fit to be resorted to) is spent in reading 'the book of the prophet Esaias.' And when Philip, after having come near and heard him reading, (for even at the present day, people in the east, though reading to themselves, speak aloud, so that they can be easily heard by persons at a distance,) asked him, 'Understandest thou what thou readest?' his humility was attractively portrayed. He confessed his ignorance, his inability to unravel the dark passages of scripture. He asked Philip to sit beside him, and submitted himself to his instructions. When, therefore, Philip preached Christ to him, and therein set the seal of inspiration to the Christian interpretation of the prophecy that he expounded, (viz. Isaiah liii.) the word was sown in a good, and honest, and well-prepared heart; and there is no wonder that the abundant fruit should have instantly appeared, that, proficient all at once in the knowledge of Christ and of his institutions, he should have desired to be baptized into his name. Nor need we wonder that Philip did not hesitate to administer to him the sacred ordinance, beyond requiring as an indispensable preliminary, a declaration of his believing the truths that he had heard. Accordingly, availing themselves of the neighbouring water, the sight of which seems to have suggested to the Ethiopian his request, they alighted from the chariot, 'went down both to the water,' (for be it carefully observed the words 'into' and 'out of,' (ver. 38, 39.) which have often been alleged as implying baptism by immersion, would with equal correctness be rendered here, as they are often rendered elsewhere, 'to' and 'from,') and there, in the observance of the holy sacrament, consummated and closed their Christian fellowship on earth. For now, the object of Philip's having been brought hither being accomplished, the Spirit, by miracle, 'caught him away,' and carried him to other scenes and other duties, (ver. 40.) so that 'the eunuch saw him no more.' Thus ended their most singular and profitable interview. Scripture does not inform us with what feelings the Ethiopian, bearing the new name of Christian, was welcomed back again amongst his friends, nor how, with his more enlightened views, he carried himself in his courtly station, and amongst his idolatrous countrymen; but it beautifully follows up the description of his character that it had already given, by showing that, in addition to the humility and godliness of his previous history,

he now enjoyed the 'glorious liberty' of the gospel day; that as heretofore his life and conversation had been worthy of God's revealed word, so now they were worthy of the Saviour in whom he had believed, ver. 39. For though his kind and heaven-sent instructor had been suddenly and mysteriously taken from his side, he neither murmured nor mourned, but 'went on his way,' as a confirmed disciple of Christ, 'whom indeed he had not seen, but in whom believing he rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

PRAYER.

Most holy Father, enable us, in drawing nigh to thee at the close of another week, to humble ourselves because of all the sins that throughout its course we have committed, and all the unthankfulness and unworthiness wherewith we are chargeable. In the multitude of our thoughts within us, how seldom have we cherished thoughts of thee! and in the midst of all our enjoyments, how little have we sought to enjoy thy favour, and thy fellowship, and thy presence! Our iniquities we cannot reckon up before thee; they have gone up over our heads; they reach even to the heavens; and were it not that thy mercy endureth for ever, we must long ere now have been consumed. Look now upon us, we entreat thee, in the face of thine Anointed. And, as thou givest us the near prospect of another day of Christian privilege and holy rest, preserve us unto it, and prepare us for it. Let thy Holy Spirit come with power into our hearts, to restrain our worldly thoughts, to crucify our sinful affections, to awaken new delights in thy word, and new desires towards thy courts. To us and to all our friends grant that thy day that draweth on, may be a day of the power and glory of the Saviour. Bless all thy ministering servants throughout the church, that they may be directed to seasonable words, and that they may be enabled to preach them affectionately, and purely, and successfully. Feed thy church every where, that it languish not. Refresh thy heritage, and that right early. Hasten the time when, throughout the whole world, thy sabbaths shall be hallowed, and in every tongue, and by every family of men, thy worship shall be acceptably celebrated. Hasten the time when thine ancient people shall be built up into the one spiritual temple of the Holy Ghost, and shall enter into the enjoyment of Christian privileges and saving grace. May we ever be found rejoicing in the hope of that blessed time when the knowledge of thee shall cover the earth, and of that glorious day when the number of the elect shall be completed, and the marriage of the Lamb shall have come. Unto which do thou give us to look and haste, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK. SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVII. 7, &c.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXXVII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1. In trouble, and more especially in spiritual trouble, prayer is the only effectual resource, and it is one which, if we rightly betake ourselves to it, never fails. Ver. 2. In order to success in prayer, importunity and perseverance are requisite: a refusing to be comforted by any thing short of an answer in peace. Ver. 3, 4. So long as God sees meet to withhold his countenance, spiritual trouble is increased by the remembrance of him. Ver. 5—7. A day of adversity ought to be a day of calm consideration, of serious reflection upon the ways of God in ancient times, upon former seasons of spiritual rejoicing, and also a time of careful self-examination. Ver. 7—9. Even the people of God are sometimes, in a day of distress, and under apprehensions of spiritual desertion, tempted to indulge hard thoughts of him and of his ways. Ver. 10. But, by persevering in prayer, they are brought to acknowledge that such thoughts originate in their own weakness: for that all changes in providence are in accordance with the unchangeable nature and perfections of him who is the Most High. Ver. 11, 12. That the distrustful influence of this infirmity may be most effectually averted by meditating upon the ways of him who, even in seasons of deepest depression, hath in all generations shown himself to be the dwelling-place of his people. Ver. 13. That the dealings of God are all in holiness, and can be traced only by those unfeignedly desirous to acquiesce in his will. Ver. 14. While, at the same time, they are all regulated by a power that is irresistible. Ver. 15—18. The redemption wrought out for the children of Israel, when groaning under severe and relentless bondage, the various impressive circumstances in which the hand of the Almighty was manifested in that redemption, proved that he was both able and willing to deliver them from enemies more and mightier than they. Ver. 19, 20. Though darkness may for a time seem to compass his ways, when the appointed season of deliverance arrives he can raise up instruments for accomplishing his gracious purposes.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let the people of God, in all their trials and afflictions, approach a throne of grace, by the new and living way opened up for them into the holiest of all. Let them not cease to stretch out their hands, and to pour out their hearts, until they are warranted to conclude that God hath given ear to their voice. When thoughts of God cause trouble, when by continued complaining the spirit is overwhelmed, sleep banished from the eyes, and the tongue unable to express its griefs, let us review his ways in former times. Let us remember that it has not been always thus with us; that though we may think we have cause for complaint now, we have formerly had cause of rejoicing. In communing with our own hearts,

let us inquire how we have improved seasons of communion with God, and diligently search out in ourselves, where alone they can be found, the causes of their interruption. Let us ascribe to our own weakness, to our partial and limited views, any disposition to question the mercy and the faithfulness of our gracious God. Assured that he is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever, let us look back, let us examine the records of his providence and of his grace, and there we shall perceive abundant illustrations of the truth, that although the time of deliverance may seem protracted, he is assuredly a present help in time of trouble. And if the mind of a pious Israelite was soothed in the depths of spiritual distress, and enabled to overcome his despairing fears and unbelieving doubts, by dwelling upon the redemption of his fathers from the land of Egypt, let us, in similar circumstances, look to that redemption announced in the gospel; a redemption from an evil far more extensive and lasting than that under which Israel groaned, and effected by means unspeakably more astonishing. And meditating upon this doing of the Lord, so marvellous in our eyes, let us, in all our adversities, rest in the assurance that he who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will, with him, also freely give us all things.

PRAYER.

Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion, and unto thee shall the vow be paid. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. We, the monuments of thy sparing mercy, would, on the morning of this thy holy day, desire to bow at the footstool of thy throne. We bless thee, that by the return of the Christian sabbath, the instituted memorial of our Redeemer's triumph over death and the grave, we are reminded that thou, the Sovereign of the universe, art seated upon a throne of mercy and grace—that, well pleased with thy beloved Son, thou beholdest with a pleasant countenance all who come unto thee by him, as the propitiation for sin through faith in his blood,—that thou art reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. On him we would place all our dependence for pardon, for reconciliation, and life. See, O God, our shield, look on the face of thine Anointed. For his sake take away all our iniquity, heal our backslidings, love us freely, receive us graciously. May thy Spirit take of the things that are Christ's, and show them to us in all their suitableness to the wants and weaknesses of our immortal souls, so as that we may esteem him as all our salvation, and as all our desire. Impart unto us more full and realizing views of thy glory in the face of Christ. In him and in his cross may we see mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace embracing each other. When temptations assail

us, when fears depress us, when led to question thy promises and grace, may we be enabled to meditate upon thy doings, and may thy Spirit so guide our meditations, that we may be victorious over every spiritual foe; that we may be prepared to acquiesce in thy will in all things, both in doing and in suffering. May thy ways and thy words be the subject of our attention on this thy holy day, and may our meditation of thee be sweet. We would, in a more especial manner, entreat thee to be with us when we go to thy house of prayer, and to make us joyful in thy presence. Do thou, who appointedst leaders for thine ancient people, and didst qualify them for their work, be with thy ministering servant who is on this day to guide our devotions. May he come forth in the fullness of the power of the gospel of Christ; and while the treasure is only in earthen vessels, may the power and the excellency be of thee. Accompany with thy blessing the preaching of the gospel throughout this and all lands. Accept of our thanksgiving for the goodness thou hast hitherto made to pass before us. We bless thee for the mercies of the past night and this morning, and for the comfortable circumstances in which we now appear before thee. Pardon all our sins and vouchsafe to us an answer in peace, for the sake of Christ Jesus our Lord and only Redeemer. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 14.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXXVIII. 1—24.

REMARKS.

In order to our profiting by any communication, it is necessary that we diligently attend to it, and upon such diligent attention, the communications made to us regarding the ways and works of God, have peculiarly strong claims. The appointment of God is, that one generation shall praise his works to another; the command is, that they to whom his will is revealed should teach it diligently to their children; that, while praising God, they unfold to them the ground of their praises; instruct them in the meaning of the services they render; that the revelation originally made might be transmitted in all its fullness and purity to succeeding generations. It is incumbent upon all to whom the word of God is preached, to receive it in faith, that they may profit thereby. And when instructed in these truths ourselves, and when experiencing their quickening, their sanctifying, and their peace-giving influences, let us in the spirit in which the apostle said, 'would to God that all men were as I am,' be ready to embrace every opportunity of imparting these truths to such as are ignorant of them. Heads of families ought in a

peculiar manner to regard it as their duty thus to act; to view the divine command to Israel of old as still addressed to themselves, Deut. vi. 6—9. In unfolding these truths they ought to endeavour to set them in such a light as to present, to their offspring, the strong encouragement they have to set their hope in him who is the Rock of ages, and to impress upon them the necessity of remembering his works, and keeping his commandments, if they would preserve and cherish that hope. The perversity and backslidings of God's ancient people, ought to be proposed as beacons, warning all of the danger of such a conduct; that, by avoiding it, they may not expose themselves to a like punishment. Many and impressive were the manifestations of the divine power and compassion shown in behalf of Israel of old, in delivering them from enemies more and mightier than they, and in making a continued provision for their support during their journey to the land of promise. Yet of all these they often lost sight; often warned, and often punished, they heeded not the warnings, they forgot the punishments, and turned again after folly. We, more highly favoured than they, were delivered by means far more wonderful, from a bondage more oppressive and during. Furnished with all we need as travellers, not to an earthly heritage, but to a city which hath foundations, of which God is the maker and the builder, let us beware of contracting a still more aggravated guilt by the abuse of such mercies. Esteeming him who is that bread which cometh down from heaven, as all our salvation, and all our desire, let our daily prayer be, 'Lord, evermore give us this bread,' and our daily endeavour to live as nourished thereby. Relying upon that rock, which is Christ, let us drink of the water he gives, that we may never thirst, but that the water which he gives may be in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

PRAYER.

Unto thee, O Lord, we, on the evening of this thy holy day, would desire to lift up our souls. We bless thee that thou hast established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel; that we have thy word as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. We bless thee that therein thou hast revealed thyself as in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to thyself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; as having provided, for those who were perishing, a remedy, wonderful in its nature, and complete in its efficacy, and in its extent, as having laid our help upon One who is mighty. May that Spirit, who teacheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God, open our eyes to behold wondrous things out of thy law. May we be brought to feel that it is indeed quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and that it is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. By that Spirit may we be enabled to apply it faithfully to

our consciences, to our hearts and lives. Examine us, O God, and try us, and see if there be in us any evil way; that, convinced of sin, feeling that it is not in ourselves to direct our own steps, and that if tried by that law we could not appear in hope at the tribunal of a holy and heart-searching judge, we may resort to the Rock that is higher than we; that regarding thy name, thy perfections so wondrously manifested in the gospel of thy grace, as a strong tower, we may be enabled so to betake ourselves thither, as to share in spiritual and everlasting safety. For these ends follow with thy rich and effectual blessing the exercises in which we have on this day been engaged. May the truths we have read or heard from thy word be deeply impressed upon our hearts. May we hide them there that we may not sin against thee. May it be our daily endeavour to direct the attention of those with whom thou hast blessed us, and of all to whom our influence extends, to these important truths, that they may not forget thee, but may ever keep thy commandments, that there may be a seed to do service to thee when we shall be gathered to our fathers. Pardon, O Lord, the sins of our holy things, whatever thou hast on this day seen amiss in any part of our conduct. Enable us more habitually to realize thy holy presence, and ever to worship and serve thee, who art a spirit, in spirit and in truth. Follow with thy blessing the preaching of the gospel throughout the church, and hasten the time when the privileges we have this day enjoyed, and the hopes we are permitted to cherish, shall be extended to those who are still in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death. May all our friends be interested in thy favour, which is life, and in thy loving kindness, which is better than life. Visit in mercy all the sons and daughters of affliction, all who are in distress, in mind, in body, or in outward estate. Sanctify the be-reaving dispensations of thy providence to such as are visited by them. Accept of our thanksgivings for the mercies of this day of the Son of Man. Watch over us throughout the coming night; and if it be thy will that we should awake to the light of a new day, enable us to carry out with us into the world, in all their practical influence, the principles and the feelings by which we have this day professed to be actuated. Pardon our sins, and hear and answer us in mercy, for the sake of Christ Jesus, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXVII. 34, &c.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS IX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The powers that be are ordained of God, and when they abuse the authority with which they are invested, he casteth down one and raiseth another up. The commissioned servants of God are not to be deterred from executing their commission, by the dangers to which they may be exposed, nor by the reproaches thrown out against them, while at the same time they may use all means consistent with their duty, for ensuring their safety. Ver. 23—26. God hath declared that he will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children; in his providence, the visitation often visibly corresponds to the sin; whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. The covetous heart of Ahab had prompted him to obtain possession of Naboth's vineyard by injustice and murder, and in that vineyard the slain body of his son was cast, according to the word of the Lord by Elijah. Ver. 27—29. They who are associated with the wicked in their evil courses may expect to be involved in their fate. Ver. 30, 31. At the approach of danger the wicked are sometimes wont to rest delusive hopes upon former dispensations of providence, in no way applicable to their own case. Thus did Jezebel conclude that Jehu, commissioned by God, would be cut off as the traitorous Zimri had been. Ver. 32, 33. When such rulers as abuse their power are overtaken by reverses, those who, in the day of prosperity, had been their most submissive flatterers, are ready to turn their hands against them, and to aid in their destruction. Ver. 34, &c. The purpose of him whose counsel shall stand, cannot be affected by any of the actings of man. The direction of Jehu, to pay to the lifeless body of Jezebel those honours to which her rank entitled her, was at variance with what the Lord had spoken by Elijah, of Ahab and his family, (1 Kings xxi. 23—24.) In a very short time after her death this threatening was executed, and in its execution Jehu acknowledged the word of the Lord.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

'I have seen,' says the Psalmist, 'the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away; and, lo, he was not. Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.' A striking illustration of these words is presented to us in this chapter. Two wicked kings, and a queen, who surpassed them in wickedness, had long been the scourge of a guilty land, were removed by an agent, raised up by God, and specially authorised to that work. From the recorded judgments of God let us learn righteousness. By his terrors denounced against the wicked, and executed at the appointed time, let all be persuaded to turn to the Lord, to serve him in righteousness, to join trembling with their mirth. He is the Lord, he changeth not; unchangeable in holiness and infinite in power now, to hate and to punish all iniquity, as in the case of Israel of old. And as he is no respecter of persons, what he

hates and punishes in those in exalted stations, exposes to a similar hatred and punishment those in the lowest condition. Their sins are ever exposing to his wrath all who disregard his law and its sanctions, and those with whom they are connected. Their sins shall assuredly find them out. Let us all then stand in awe and guard against sin. Let us search and try ourselves, and see if there be in us any evil way. Let us rely upon the promised aid of the Spirit of God, in this self-examination. Let us, in particular, beware of braving the judgments of God, of seeking peace in the paths of sin, or in the society of the wicked. Let us, by these, be constrained to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of him who promises to exalt in due time all who do so.

PRAAYER.

O Lord, we adore thee as not only holy in hating, but as also just in punishing sin; as a consuming fire to all workers of iniquity; who hast declared that there is no peace to the wicked. Ever bearing in mind, that what was written aforetime was written for our learning, may these views of thy nature and perfections, set before us in the portion of thy word we have now been permitted to read, be deeply impressed upon our hearts. Write, O God, we beseech thee, that perfect law of thine upon our hearts. Aid us by thy Spirit in all our endeavours to avail ourselves of it as a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path. Give us grace to cherish those principles by which we have so lately, on thy day, and in the services of thy sanctuary, professed to be actuated. May we carry them along with us to the business of life; by these may we be influenced in all the duties to which, in the course of thy providence, we may be called, and in all the trials and temptations to which we may be exposed; that thus letting our light shine before men, they may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus, and may thus be led to glorify thee, our Father in heaven. May we ever live as disciples of Jesus, in whose teachings we have so clear illustrations of the purity and extent of thy holy law, and in whose sufferings we see mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace embracing each other, the impressive punishment of sin, and at the same time, a way into the holiest of all opened up for us who had sinned. We would come to thee by this way, we would esteem an interest in a once crucified, but now glorified Redeemer, as all our salvation, and as all our desire. We would call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to bless and magnify thy holy name, who hast visited us in our low and lost estate, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us. We would adore the condescension and the grace of him who, although he was rich, became poor,

that we through his poverty might be rich. And O may thy Spirit take of the things that are Christ's and show them unto us, that, exercising believing dependence upon him, we may ever feel the constraining influence of his unparalleled love; leading us thus to judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them. May we ever live by his law, and uniformly walk in his footsteps. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, may we be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. May we follow him through good report and through bad report, that as he was raised from the dead by the glory of thee, the Father, we also may walk before thee in newness of life. May we have grace so to live by faith in him now, that when he shall appear we may have confidence, and may not be ashamed before him at his coming. We bless thee, O Lord, for the mercies of the past night, and of this morning. Give us grace to walk in thy fear all the day long. Prosper us in all our lawful pursuits; may we be diligent in business, acknowledging thee in all our ways, and looking up to thee for direction in all our paths, relying upon thy grace amidst all the temptations that may assail us. Pardon our sins, and hear us in mercy, for the sake of thy Son, our only Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XL. 1.

SCRIPTURE—Acts ix. 1—22.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. The determined hostility of this youthful persecutor to the cause of Christ, and the activity of his pharasaical zeal, to extirpate by the most severe measures, all who believed in Jesus, are here emphatically described by the inspired historian. Ver. 3, 4. In such a conduct were the words of the Saviour verified, John xvi. 2. The Redeemer is sometimes found of such as seek him not, and when all ordinary means fail, can cause his voice to be heard, and his authority to be acknowledged, by such as are vessels of mercy. Ver. 5. The injuries done to his people, he reckons as done to himself; 'why persecutest thou me?' Opposition to the cause of Christ, while it must prove unavailing, since the gates of hell cannot prevail against his church, must always aggravate both the guilt and the misery of those by whom it is offered. Ver. 6. When the heart of the awakened penitent is truly impressed, he will resort for direction to him who is the only

way, and the truth, and the life. The progress of the work which extraordinary means have begun, will be left to those which are ordinary to advance and to perfect. Ver. 9. Serious meditation, in abstraction from the world and its indulgences, is the most suitable exercise for those whose eyes have been opened to a sense of their sinfulness, and of their need of a Saviour. Ver. 10—12. He who in his power and grace begins a good work in any, makes provision for carrying it on. Ver. 13, 14. The people of Christ, while called to be faithful unto the death, are not unnecessarily to expose themselves to danger. Ver. 15, 16. While that in which they apprehend danger, is often, when all the circumstances are known, a work in which they will experience comfort and joy. Ver. 17. Prompt obedience to the commands of the Saviour, is the duty of all his people. They whose hearts have been enlarged, will run in the way of the divine commandments; and with peculiar alacrity ought they to run, who are honoured as bearers of a message of mercy to their fellow-men. Ver. 18. Having, in the gift of the Holy Ghost, received the thing signified, the sign thereof was administered. Ver. 19. Intercourse with the people of Christ, in which we may benefit by their experience, is a fit preparation for the work to which any of his people may be called. Personal experience of the sufficiency of Christ as a Saviour, is the most essential qualification in all who would speak in his name; and where this is, the word spoken from the heart, may, through the divine blessing, be expected to prove effectual in the conviction and conversion of the hearers.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Seeing, in the conduct of the persecuting Saul, a striking illustration of the deceitfulness of sin, that he, although zealous for the law and the prophets, resisted all evidence of the divine mission of him to whom they bear witness; that, while glorying in his descent from Abraham, he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against all who believed in him whose day Abraham rejoiced to see afar off; let us keep a strict watch over our own hearts, and diligently avail ourselves of all the means whereby our consciences may be thoroughly enlightened. Having, in the conversion of Saul, such a striking instance of the sovereignty and efficacy of divine grace, we ought to pray, that we ourselves, and others also, may be brought more completely under its influence; that we may willingly bow to the sceptre of the Redeemer's righteousness. And as the surest evidence of our having done so, we ought, habitually, to apply to him for direction what he would have us to do, and carefully follow the direction he gives, obeying his commands, observing his ordinances, and desiring the salvation of others. Would to God that all men were as I am, was thenceforth the prayer of him to whom Jesus appeared on the way to Damascus; and such will still be the prayer of all who love the Lord Jesus, and in the spirit of that prayer they will ever be ready to act.

PRAYER.

On the evening of this day, we, O Lord,

would desire to bow before thee, as the hearer and the answerer of prayer. Thou, Lord, hast done great things for us in love, and thy mercy is upon them that fear thee, from generation unto generation. We bless thee, that Jesus was declared to be thy Son with power, and by the resurrection from the dead; and that, exalted to thy right hand as the advocate of his people, he is able and willing to save unto the uttermost all who come unto thee by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. We bless thee for the recorded illustration of the efficacy of his saving power and grace, to which our attention hath now been directed; and assured that he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, we would desire to cast ourselves upon the riches of that grace. May we be a willing people in the day of the Saviour's power. May every thought and every imagination in us, that would exalt itself against the knowledge of thee our God, be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And while rejoicing that there is no condemnation to them who are in him, may we ever bear in mind, that all such walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; that when he gave himself for us, it was that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. May his law ever be our guide, his statutes our counsellors, and his judgments our song in the house of our pilgrimage. May we be careful to walk as he also walked. Like him, may we count it our meat to do the will of thee, our Father in heaven; and like him, may we ever be ready to do good to all; to do what in us lies to promote the temporal and the spiritual welfare of our brethren of mankind, and, in all our endeavours, to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; do thou, Lord, work in us to will and to do of thy good pleasure. Fulfil in us all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power. Ever impart unto us grace, whereby we may serve thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Enable us to live by faith in Christ, that when he who is our life shall appear, we may also appear with him in glory. May thy kingdom come, may thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. May the time soon come, when the knowledge of thee, the Lord, shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Bless the church established in our native land. Bless this corner of thy vineyard, and strengthen the hands and encourage the heart of thy servant who labours among us in holy things. Command an abundant blessing

upon his labours. Bless our native land, and all ranks and degrees of persons in it, from the queen upon the throne, to the meanest of her subjects. Comfort all who mourn, heal the sick, bind up the broken-hearted. Prepare the dying for death, and may the living lay it to heart that they too must die. Be the friend of our friends, reward our benefactors, forgive our enemies. We would desire to acknowledge, with grateful hearts, all the goodness thou hast ever made to pass before us. We bless thee for what of thy goodness and grace we have experienced throughout the day come to a close, and for the comfortable circumstances in which we have now been permitted to worship thee. Pardon the sins of which we have been guilty. Enable us now to lie down in thy fear, that we may awake in thy favour. And all that we ask is in a dependence upon the merits of Jesus Christ, our only Redeemer. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XVIII. 1—3.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS X.

REMARKS.

In preceding chapters we are informed of the sins of which Ahab had been guilty, and the judgments which, in consequence thereof, God had pronounced against him, his family, and kindred. From this chapter we learn how these threatenings were executed upon his seventy sons, and his relatives, 'the brethren of Ahaziah, as they were going down to salute the children of the king;' and from the consideration of these events, we should be taught how unchangeable are the declarations of Jehovah, and how certainly they will all be fulfilled.

When we reflect on the birth, the rank, and the expectations of the persons who were thus cut off, and that so many of them were destroyed by their father's friends, and 'the bringers up of his children,' to whom they might have looked for gratitude and protection, we should be taught the folly, as well as sinfulness, of seeking for our families the objects of the world, and the friendship and favour of our fellow-men. Rather let us 'first seek for them the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, and all other things shall be added unto them.'

From what is here recorded of Jehu, we may draw another valuable lesson. We see a man zealous in the cause of religion, pursuing the enemies of God, and made the instrument of fulfilling upon them his righteous purposes. But how manifest in all his doings is the influence of a self-seeking, an ostentatious, and a worldly spirit, and how great reason is there for believing that, whilst accomplishing the designs of God, he himself would yet be a castaway!

Many men think lightly of false religion, and

especially in the present times there is a tendency to regard all systems as the same, and to denounce as the mere effusion of bigotry the actings of thoroughly decided Christian principle. The dreadful judgments passed upon the idolaters of Baal, should tell us in what a light the opponents of his truth are held by God, and if they are not now visited by the immediate tokens of his displeasure, assuredly a day is coming when they shall both be seen and felt; the day when we shall 'discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.'

On the perusal of the record of such destructions as are here related in this, and so many other parts of the Old Testament, some have objected that they present God in too terrible an aspect, and that it is difficult to believe in the actual occurrence of such scenes. But these men are ignorant of the true nature and consequences of sin, and are as neglectful of the book of providence, wherein they are displayed, as they are of the word of God. For is not the whole 'creation groaning and travailling in pain until now,' because of sin? Whence but from sin come all the sufferings and desolations under which the whole world is at this moment labouring? And what from all this should we learn, but that God punished idolaters of old only in the same way, though more immediately and directly, as that in which he testifies against sinners now? Above all, we should learn from such things, that whilst long-suffering and gracious, God will 'by no means clear the guilty,' and that they will not escape who neglect so great salvation.

PRAYER.

Everlasting God, we approach thee in Christ Jesus, by whom alone we can have access to thee. Pardon our sins, and enable us to draw near to thee, not in the spirit of bondage, but as children to a reconciled Father. We thank thee for bringing us to the light of another day, and we implore that, while graciously continuing to us our temporal being, thou wouldst make us look to our immortal destiny, and improve all other blessings for the glory and the salvation of our souls. We again desire therefore to renew our covenant with thee. May the Holy Spirit reveal to us our awful state by nature. May he convince us more and more of our sin and misery and utter helplessness. May he take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us. May the Spirit show unto us Christ's glorious nature, his wondrous humiliation, his perfect work, the full and free provision secured by it. May he make us to hunger and thirst more after righteousness; to understand, to appropriate, to feed upon the promises, so that the life we live in the flesh may be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and who gave himself for us. Bless us to us the instructions of thy holy word. Lead us to consider how sure are the threatenings that

come from the mouth of the Lord, and that they shall all be fulfilled. But O! suffer us not to take refuge from thy coming judgments in any false system. May we ever feel that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus only. May we ourselves be interested in that name, and do thou hearken to us when we pray for all idolaters, whether in heathen or in Christian lands, and that thou wouldst bring them, and the followers of every other error, to the acknowledgment and obedience of the truth. Impress us, heavenly Father, by a deeper sense of the evils which sin has brought upon the world. May the record of the calamities and miseries which it has entailed be made the means of enabling us to see still more the need of a Mediator, to receive him the more joyfully, to rely upon him the more faithfully, and prove him, as the rock smitten in this wilderness, to be drawing more abundantly the waters of life, till the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed us and lead us to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. Lord have mercy on us, and bless through Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLVI. 1—3.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS IX. 23—43.

REMARKS.

Paul, though now changed by divine grace, had long continued an enemy to Christ and his cause. In the suspicion even of his friends, and in the redoubled enmity of his foes, he is made to experience one amongst the many evil consequences that arise from a sudden or a late conversion to the Lord. But believers should not be too suspicious nor distant in their intercourse with such converts, but whilst exercising all prudence, should mix it with tenderness, and encourage, and instruct, and pray for them.

The church need not expect frequent or lengthened seasons of rest in such a world as this, a world where, like the ark in the deluge, exposed to winds and waves, she has to encounter the enmity of men and devils. But whilst God is pledged for her eventual safety, he does sometimes afford her rest, and if the troubles through which she is made to pass, have been sent in mercy and been sanctified, her rest will be like that here described, not an inactive, a degrading and destroying rest, but a rest during which she shall be edified, be made to grow more in the knowledge and love of Christ, and conformity to his image, to walk in the fear of the Lord under a constant and prevailing impression of his presence and desire for his glory, to be instant in prayer for the promised blessings of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter,

and to experience them in a purifying and peaceful and joyful communion with their heavenly Father; and thus the church will prosper in her rest.

How earnest and indefatigable were the apostles in the service of their Lord. Their example should greatly humble the ministers of Christ, because of their unbelief and unprofitableness, and should urge them to pray for grace to be more faithful, devoted, and persevering, and to be more entirely dependent on his blessing to crown their labours with success. If they did so, Christ would hear and answer, and abundantly bless them.

In the interesting record of Dorcas, the disciple, we observe the practical effects of a living faith in Christ. Let none, whatever be their sex or station, say that they have not the opportunity of glorifying his blessed name. Let them look to this woman, and if their hearts be born again in the faith of the Redeemer, they will be at no loss for objects on which to exercise their Christian sympathies. They will find them at home and abroad, in the souls and bodies of men. Would that we had more such characters as Dorcas—humble, devoted, self-denying, fruitful!

PRAYER.

Thou art the high and holy One that inhabitest eternity, but humblest thyself to behold what is done upon the earth. Look in mercy upon us who now bow ourselves before thee, and grant unto us the Spirit of grace, and of supplication. We thank thee for thy blessed word, but would remember that thou only canst enable us to understand and to profit by it. We pray for those who resist all the evidences by which thou testifiest the truth of thy word. Persuade them that if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them who are lost, in whom the god of this world blinds their minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them. Bestow upon them an humble, teachable, prayerful disposition, the honest and the good heart, that they may see and receive the truth. Do thou who commandest the light to shine out of darkness, shine into their minds to give them the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. May we ourselves feel that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. May we all be the objects of thy mercy. May we, like Paul, thy servant, be truly converted to Christ by the Holy Spirit. And, O God, may we have daily increasing evidences of the reality of our union to him, in the purification of our hearts, and in the devotedness of our lives to his glory, and the spiritual and temporal welfare of our fellow-creatures. May thy ministering servants be enabled to behold Christ as ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and procuring gifts for men. May they feel that he is Head

over all things to his church, that he is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever, and that he will preserve and prosper it till all his elect are gathered and prepared for heaven. May they discharge every duty in the faith of thy promises, and in a spirit of prayerful dependence on thy power. And do thou, O Lord, look down upon them as in the days of old, and give efficacy to the word of thy grace. Direct and preserve thy church amidst all her tribulations; and when a rest is vouchsafed to her, may she not sink into spiritual sloth, but be edified, and walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, be multiplied. We would remember, O God, before thee the sins of which we have this day been guilty. Make us to feel that they are sufficient of themselves to condemn us. Blessed be thy name for Christ, the propitiation. Sprinkle his blood upon our hearts, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Preserve us through the ensuing night, O thou who never slumberest, and in thine infinite mercy regard us in all things necessary for soul and body, for time and eternity, through Jesus Christ, the Son, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, be everlasting praise. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CVIII. 1—6.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS XI.

REMARKS.

Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, was the wife of Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat. Instigated partly by revengeful, and partly by ambitious passion, she sought the destruction of the remainder of the seed royal, and succeeded in the slaughter of them all, with the exception of Joash, her infant grandchild, who was mercifully delivered by means of Jehosheba, the sister of Ahaziah, who was married to Jehoiada, the high priest. In this way the royal line was preserved, and the prophecies concerning the descent of the Messiah from it, were fulfilled.

We should learn from the deeds of Athaliah to what a height of madness and of cruelty the human mind can rise when under the influence of unhalloved passion, and that nothing but the restraining grace of God prevents any man from being guilty of actions which, when committed, he can loathe and reprobate.

In the destruction of so many of the posterity of Jehoshaphat in consequence of the unholy alliance with the family of Ahab, we are reminded of the fatal results to all parties of marriages contracted without a regard to the will and the blessing of God. Such connections have in every age been injurious to personal religion, domestic peace, and to the spiritual interests of the children.

In the preservation of Joash, as a brand from the burning, we should recognize the providence which God continually exercises over his church, and be persuaded that even in the most disastrous seasons he will so overrule all events as that the kingdom of Christ shall be secured, and all his purposes concerning it be accomplished.

The conduct of Jehoiada shows us what the ministers of religion are warranted to do on an emergency, and the result of it proves what important services they may then be the instruments of rendering to the cause of God. Especially like him should they desire that the king and the people should stand in a covenant relation to God, and be guided as a nation, as well as individuals, by a supreme regard for his will and the advancement of his glory, and by giving every discouragement to the principles and practices of irreligious men.

PRAYER.

O thou great and glorious, and, in Christ Jesus, most gracious God, behold us in mercy, for we are sinners before thee, sinners by nature, and by unnumbered actual transgressions; we deserve nothing but condemnation, we can plead for nothing but mercy. Lord, be merciful to us miserable sinners. Blot out all our iniquities by the cleansing blood of Christ. Speak peace unto our souls. Shine into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. May we be enabled to see, to love, to cleave unto thee this day, as our Father in Christ. May we be emptied of ourselves. May we be delivered from all self-righteous feelings, from all trust in our own wisdom and strength, from all mere worldly desires. May Christ dwell within us. May we behold his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. May we see that thou, the eternal and omnipotent God, hast made thyself over to us in him,—I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. O! that thou wouldst enable us this day to appropriate to ourselves the privileges of this blessed relation; wherever we are, and in whatever duties we are engaged, may we realize a sense of thy fatherly presence. Whilst others say, Who will show us any good? our heart's desire is, that thou, O God, wouldst lift up the light of thy countenance upon us. Do thou lead us to love thee with all our heart and soul, to walk as if seeing thee who art invisible; to be constrained to every duty by the remembrance of thine unspeakable goodness and mercy, and to resist every temptation, saying, Shall we do this great evil and sin against God. Bless unto us the instructions of thy holy word; may it be as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Do thou bring up to our remembrance the lessons

which it teaches; do thou cause us to follow them in our own daily walk and conversation. We pray especially for our native land. May it be in covenant with thee. May thy word be received by it as the word of the living God, and be followed as the supreme, the only rule of duty. May we seek thy favour in Christ Jesus above all things, keeping thy commandments, and statutes and judgments, and so may we know that the Lord our God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations. Hear us, O Lord, for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXIII. 4—6.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS x. 1—24.

REMARKS.

Among the means which were employed for preserving the knowledge of the true God, was the distinction respecting animals clean and unclean, Lev. xi. 24—26. (referred to in this chapter), the former of which might be used for food and sacrifices, whilst the latter were to be rejected, a distinction which was designed to apply to the Jewish and Gentile nations, the one possessing the knowledge of the true God, the other sunk in ignorance and idolatry, and which, although carried by the Jews to unauthorized lengths, was yet most important as a means for keeping them separate from the Gentiles, and for preserving the truths and promises of revelation. When the Saviour was manifested there was no longer a necessity for this separation between them. Both were guilty before God; both stood in need of an interest in Christ; to both of them Christ must be preached, and therefore the distinction which was before necessary and useful, was now to be done away. We here learn the way in which it was to be abolished. Cornelius was a Gentile, but living in the country of the Jews, he had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with divine revelation, and the purposes of God announced therein. Of that opportunity he was enabled, by divine grace, to avail himself; he believed in the true God, and in the promises of the Messiah, and showed the influence of religious principle in the holiness and benevolence of his life. In consequence of this, he was held in much esteem even by the Jews themselves, who would thus be better prepared for the mighty change in God's dispensation which was about to be introduced through him. We are here told in what way the divine favour was announced towards him.

In the mean time, we may learn from this interesting history, that when God has a purpose of grace for any man, he does not allow such a one to stop at partial or imperfect views of religious truth. He first awakens him by his Spirit, then leads him

to take advantage of all the means of knowledge within his reach, and brings him at last to the full discovery and reception of the blessed Saviour, in whom he has rest and peace. This is the course and consummation of divine grace in the soul of one of the elect, from which we should learn that whatever may be our convictions of the truth of the bible, and of the existence and character of God, we are not to be satisfied with these, but pray that we may be led farther on, as Cornelius was, till we obtain safety, and peace, and life, in union to Christ.

We may here also see that as all need Christ, so there is no employment which will prevent any man from finding him. Cornelius was a soldier by profession, of all others thought to be the most unfavourable to religion, and yet we observe what progress he made in the spiritual life, and what a character is given of him. And why should it not be so generally amongst our soldiers? The scriptures are in their possession, and the Holy Spirit is promised them. Alas! it is their sin alone that is the cause why there are not more Corneliuses in our armies; and this Roman soldier, with his fewer advantages, will be adduced to aggravate their condemnation. But blessed be God, that the number of truly Christian soldiers is increasing, and may he be pleased to multiply his grace amongst them more and more.

This history also teaches us that it is the will of God to employ man in communicating the knowledge of salvation to their fellow-creatures. An angel is sent to Cornelius, but only for the purpose of directing him to Peter, for 'he,' it is said, 'shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.' And however despised the preaching of the gospel may be by the natural man, let us hence learn that the salvation of souls is effected by that instrumentality; that though to them who perish, it be foolishness, to us who are called it is the power of God.

Let us rejoice that there is no respect of persons with God, that his people are gathered from all nations under heaven, and that he commands his gospel to be preached to every creature; that thus to make it known is the great design of the Christian church, and that for which he has promised to be with it always, even to the end of the world. We should be humbled under a deep sense of our great and long continued neglect of this duty, and seek the more earnestly to employ men, who, like Peter, shall proclaim, whether to Jews or Gentiles, 'that whosoever believeth in Christ shall receive remission of sins.'

PRAYER.

Almighty and most gracious God, we acknowledge that in ourselves we are full of darkness and of enmity, and that it is altogether of thy grace and by the Holy Spirit that any of the children of men are awakened from their natural condition, and led to take heed unto the things which belong to their eternal peace. We pray that thou wouldst be pleased to stir up to a sense of sin and danger, those who are unconcerned about their everlasting destiny, that thou wouldst lead them to inquire for thy truth, and that thou

wouldst not cease to enlighten and to guide them, till thou hast brought forth judgment unto victory. And do thou make us all to feel that even when we are brought to Christ by the Spirit, we have need to be constantly upheld by thy grace; and do thou, O blessed God, cause us to cleave to him, and keep us by thy mighty power through faith unto salvation. We implore that thou wouldst cause us all to feel for the spiritual darkness, and degradation, and misery of heathen lands, and to act in regard to them as those who are persuaded that Christ is the only Saviour; that there is no present peace, no future happiness, but through an interest in his blood. Blessed God, enlarge our hearts towards those who are in the region and shadow of death; multiply the number of those who may declare to them the unsearchable riches of Christ. May they go forth as called by thee; may they labour in the faith of thy promises, and in dependence on thy grace; and do thou, O Holy Spirit, one with the Father and the Son, come down upon them and bless their labours, so that great multitudes may believe and be turned unto the Lord. We pray this evening for the forgiveness of all our trespasses. Whilst day after day is passing on, and hurrying us so much nearer to death, and judgment, and eternity, we beseech thee to make us feel more strongly how short our time is, and give us grace to redeem it. 'Make us more humble, more full of faith and love in Christ; beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, may we be changed into the same image, from glory unto glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. We throw ourselves upon thy mercy this night. Do thou receive us, heavenly Father, and grant that whether we live, we may live unto the Lord; whether we die, we may die unto the Lord; whether living or dying we may be his. In Christ's name we present our supplications, and through him would we implore a gracious answer. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CII. 13.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS XII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In ver. 2. it appears that Jehoash did what 'was right in the sight of the Lord,' all the days of Jehoiada the priest. But in referring to 2 Chron. xxiv. 17, 18. we learn that, after his decease, he fell into a state of idolatry, and had a share in putting Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, to death, because he testified against his iniquity. It is a fair inference

from this, that his early zeal in the cause of God, and in repairing the temple, is to be traced, in a considerable degree, to the counsels of Jehoiada. The temple, as is evident from several verses in the beginning of this chapter, was in a very dilapidated condition. Partially they may have resulted from the effects of time, but we find, in turning to 2 Chron. xxiv. 7. that the sons of the wicked Athaliah had wilfully 'broken up the house of God.' Jehoiash set about repairing the breaches, and the means taken are related.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

It is of great importance to have pious men for our guides and advisers, especially in early life. Had Jehoiada been more decided for God, it would have been better both on his own account, and on that of the king. For if the high places had all been taken away, and a thorough reformation effected, the latter end of the reign of Jehoash might have been very different from what it was. And hence it appears to be at once our duty and our wisdom, not to tolerate any known abuse in the service of God, on account of the prejudices or passions of men. The king's zeal in the repair of the temple is most commendable. Breaches, even in the walls of God's house, are unbecoming; that place where Jehovah is worshipped, and his salvation made known. Blessed are all they who, influenced by right motives, lend a helping-hand in 'enlarging the place of the tent, and in strengthening the stakes of Zion.' And blessed, thrice blessed are they, who labour in faith and prayer to repair and build up that glorious spiritual temple, which is 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;' such individuals should always endeavour to secure the character which was given of the workmen in repairing the temple; 'they dealt faithfully.' The end of the reign of Jehoash, was as wicked and calamitous, as its commencement was bright and promising. So long as he continued in the service of God, he prospered. But when he established idolatry throughout his kingdom, and put Zechariah to death, he found that it was a vain thing to strive against the Lord. Our only security, either as nations or individuals, is to abide in the fear of God, and in the faith of his Son, whom to serve is life eternal.

PRAYER.

O living God, thou art not confined to temples made with hands: heaven is thy throne, and earth is thy footstool. Thou art every where present to hear the cry and to answer the prayer of those who call upon thee in spirit and in truth. But we bless and adore thee, that though thou inhabitest the praises of eternity, and fillest the universe with thy presence, thou hast chosen Zion for thy dwelling-place, to make known thy mercy, and display thy glory there. And we thank thee, O Lord, for that rich river of gospel ordinances which makes glad thy holy city, and revives the hopes of thy waiting people. Praise and glory be unto thy blessed name, that thou

urt building up, in this ruined and guilty world, a glorious spiritual temple, of which the ancient temple was only a type. May thy gracious spirit descend into our hearts, to draw us near unto thyself, and to make us living stones in that glorious edifice, which is built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. And may the Holy Spirit purify the inner temple of our souls, and make them a fit habitation for the living God. We have cause, O Lord, to mourn and lament that sin has so frequently defiled the temple of our hearts. We have cause to lament the evil suggestions of satan, the sad power of the world, and of our own unholy desires. O blessed Spirit of the Saviour, come and revisit thy temple. Quicken us from the death of sin, purify our hearts from its polluting influence, and exalt the Saviour to the throne of our affections. In our future lives, by thy grace, may our thoughts and our desires be fixed in heaven, where Christ now sitteth at the right hand of God. And may we be enabled, by a holy and consistent conduct, to evidence the inward presence of the spirit of holiness. Guide us, O Lord, during this day, by thy heavenly counsel, and lead us into the company of those, who will encourage us to continue in the service of Christ. May we be enabled to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our God and Saviour; and in the midst of prevailing unbelief and indifference, to be decided in our Christian principles and in our Christian profession. Lord, help us to walk in thy strength, that we may not only give an early promise of believing obedience, but also may be enabled to continue steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in thy blessed work, for as much as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. Gracious Father, to thee we commit all our dear friends. May they also be spiritual stones in the living temple, and members of that family of which Christ is the glorious Head. Remember, we beseech thee, that church which Jesus purchased with his own blood. Raise up holy men to stand in the breaches of Zion, and to repair the wastes of many generations. O Lord, thou wilt yet appear in thy glory, when thou buildest up thy Zion. Thou wilt regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. Herein have we still cause to rejoice, that thou art the same, and that thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants also shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee. Graciously hear our prayers, and answer us in mercy, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM xxv. 12.

SCRIPTURE—Acts x. 25—48.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 26. The worship of any created being, however exalted his condition, and however important the benefits which he confers, in the sight of God is gross idolatry. The Lord is a jealous God, and will not divide his worship and glory with another. The language of scripture is, 'him only shalt thou serve.' In the 31st verse, we meet with a beautiful illustration of that scripture doctrine, 'for he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.' Light and advantages, when improved, will most certainly be accompanied with increasing light and comfort, till the eyes are fully opened to discern the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. From the 36th verse, onward to the 43d, we have a cluster of the great doctrines of our most holy faith. The sacred writer starts with Christ the chief corner-stone. He states his supreme power and dominion, 'he is Lord of all;' his capacity for the work which was given him to perform, 'he was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power;' his unwearied benevolence, 'he went about doing good and healing diseases.' He states also his death and the manner of it, then his resurrection from the grave, and finally his glorious second advent, as the Judge of all the earth. What a rich and blessed summary of gospel truth! Baptism is not regeneration. A man may be baptized with water, and still want the inward and saving baptism of the Holy Ghost. But every one who has been baptized with the Spirit, has a right to the outward sign and seal of the covenant of grace, ver. 47. We are not now to look for any miraculous evidences of the Spirit's power, such as the early believers received, but for the peaceable fruits of righteousness, which are to the praise and glory of God.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

There is one blessed and comfortable truth clearly brought before us in this passage of sacred scripture, that God is no respecter of persons. It is not necessary that we should possess wealth, or titles, or honours, before we can draw near unto God, and make our wants and sorrows known. Rich and poor are equally encouraged to approach his throne, and to partake of the blessings of his salvation. We also learn this other truth from the case of Cornelius, that if we make a due improvement of our privileges, we shall be visited with increasing light and peace, 'till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts.' The conduct of this centurion, and the conduct of his friends, when Peter appeared among them, are deserving of our serious consideration. They were waiting for the salvation of God: 'therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.' This is the spirit which we must cherish, if we would profit by the preaching of the gospel. We must receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and

practise it in our lives. To minds in this state of preparation, the great doctrines of the gospel will prove most acceptable. They will rejoice in the glorious divinity of the Son of God, as Lord of all: in the perfection of his human nature, being anointed with the Holy Ghost to finish the work which the Father had given him to perform. Such minds will also delight to follow the Saviour through all his life of mercy to the scene of his death. It is there we see the prediction fulfilled, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.' It is also a cause of comfort to his people that Jesus rose from the grave, as the first fruits of them that fall asleep in him, and that he went forward to prepare for his believing followers a 'house eternal in the heavens.' We should always remember that the Holy Spirit alone can make these doctrines effectual. And as we have received the outward sign of baptism, so we should be most careful to ascertain if we have received the inward and sanctifying grace.

PRAYER.

O Lord God Almighty, who art the Father of mercies, and the God of consolation, we desire to approach thee this evening with reverence, humility and faith. We bless thee for that new and living way by which sinners can draw near unto God, with acceptance and with comfort. We rejoice that there is a Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who is able and willing to save unto the uttermost all those who come unto God through him. It is our blessed privilege, O Lord, to live in the last days of the Son of man, and to see and hear those things which many prophets and righteous men of old desired to see and hear, but were not so highly favoured. We give thee thanks that the middle wall of partition has been broken down, and that we enjoy free access into the holiest of all through the blood of Jesus. Grant us, O Lord, thine all-sufficient grace, to help us to make a due improvement of our blessed privileges. May it not be our condemnation, that light has come into the world, and that we loved the darkness rather than the light, because our deeds were evil. Enable us to listen to thy holy word with the docility of little children, to lay it up in our hearts, and practise it in our lives. May we feel, in sanctified experience, that the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; that the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; and that the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. May thy blessed Spirit open our eyes, to discern the glory and the grace of Jesus Christ. May we be enabled to receive him as Lord of all, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Thanks be unto God for his un-

speakable gift. Thanks be unto thee, O Lord, for the pure and spotless example of our divine Master; for his cruel sufferings and death, and his glorious resurrection as the first fruits of them that sleep. May we be brought to feel that he was wounded for our transgressions, that he was bruised for our iniquities, and that the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and that by his stripes alone we can be healed. May we know him in the power of his resurrection, in the fellowship of his sufferings, and be made conformable to his death. Help us frequently to meditate on his second advent as the Judge of all, and to say, in humble faith, Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus. O God of sovereign grace, pour out of thy Spirit upon our souls, that he may quicken us from the death of sin to the life of God. Baptize us with the heavenly baptism, and receive us into the number of thine adopted children. Pour out of thy Spirit upon all flesh, that the nations may be converted unto thee, and that thy scattered people may again be brought home. Bless this family and all who are dear to us by the ties of friendship or of blood. Preserve them and us from all evil, and especially from sin. Support us under every trial, and bring us to thy holy kingdom, for the sake of that Saviour whom thou hearest always. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIII. 11.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS XIII. XIV. 1—16.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In this passage we have the history of two kings of Israel, Jehoahaz and Joash, and of Amaziah king of Judah. The reign of the first of these kings was like those of his predecessors, and excited the anger of the Lord, xiii. 3. Hazael, accordingly, was sent to punish Israel, which he did severely. But God, who delights in mercy, raised up a Saviour for his people in the person of Joash, son and successor to Jehoahaz, ver. 5. In his reign the prophet Elisha died. During his last illness, Joash went to consult him, apparently in a state of great anxiety. Elisha ordered him to take a bow and arrow, and shoot in a direction eastward, probably toward the cities which had been taken by the king of Syria. It appears from a variety of passages in ancient authors, that shooting an arrow into the country of the enemy, was regarded as a declaration of war. In this case it was an emblematical act, and its repetition was the measure of his success, ver. 15—17. Elisha's miracles did not cease with his death. The Israelites had been burying a man, when they were suddenly interrupted by an invasion of the Moabites. In the

infusion which ensued, they cast the dead body to Elisha's grave, and the man, when he touched the prophet's bones, revived and stood upon his feet, *xx. 20, 21.* It is very clear from this circumstance, that no inherent power resided in Elisha to perform miracles; and that God, who used him as an instrument in life, could also employ his instrumentality when he was dead. Amaziah began his reign well, *iv. 3.* After he was sometime established on the throne, he put to death his father's murderers, but not their children, in accordance with the law of *Moses, ver. 6.* The parable in verse 9, which the king of Israel made use of in reply to a message from Amaziah, is severe and insolent; but the event proved its truth. God had forsaken Amaziah on account of his idolatry: hence he was defeated and the temple pillaged.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The lives of these three kings are full of important instruction. In the wicked reign of Jehoahaz, we see at once the danger and the folly of forgetting God. National sins bring down national judgments, while humiliation and prayer will, as certainly, be accompanied with divine forgiveness and favour. In the reign of his son and successor Joash, we may perceive the evil effects of the bad example of his father. In the tenth year of his administration, the prophet Elisha fell sick and died. The removal of such men, especially in seasons of public calamity, is a great public loss. To themselves death is gain, not only in their being removed from future evil, but in their being put into the possession of infinite and eternal good. Their death-bed is full of instruction and consolation to the godly. Long had the prophet's house been set in order, and in the near prospect of death he is perfectly calm, and able to give directions and comfort to the king of Israel. Who would not exclaim, when contemplating such a scene, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.' After Elisha's death, the Israelites appear to have been severely oppressed. But still God has respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is pleasing to think, that amid all changes, amid the desolation of death, the backslidings of the godly, and the impiety of wicked men, God's covenant with Abraham and his spiritual seed continues unchanged. How grateful should we be to him for the sure mercies of David, the everlasting covenant of his love which cannot pass away. Let it be ours constantly, to see that we are interested in that covenant which has been ratified with the blood of Christ. The life of Amaziah king of Judah, affords us some important instruction. He did well in not punishing the children, for the crime of their parents. But his message to the king of Israel savours of the pride and weakness of our fallen nature. We have much need of prayer and watchfulness, lest we should be rendered vain and presumptuous by worldly success. A near and humble walk with God, is the best security we can have for our happiness, amid the trials and difficulties of the present life, and a sweet source of consolation in the prospect of an eternal life to come.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art the hearer and the answerer of prayer; unto thee shall all flesh come. We must confess that iniquities have prevailed against us: but as for our transgressions, thou wilt purge them away. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. Thou hast been pleased, O Lord, to distinguish us in this distant island of the Gentiles, and to confer upon us many national as well as individual mercies. We thank thee for our many temporal comforts; for the blessings of peace, and the means of national prosperity. And to thee we desire to look up as the source of that spiritual light, in which our fathers have rejoiced, and which we, their children, continue to enjoy. Pardon, O God, the sad misimprovement we have made of thy peculiar favours. Deal not with us as we have dealt with thee. Help us, as a nation, to return to thy service, and to become that people whom thou, the Lord, wilt be pleased to bless. We must confess before thee, the searcher of hearts, that our individual sins have greatly increased the national guilt. We have sinned against the clearest light and the tenderest love. We have sinned against our own convictions, and against the warnings of thy word and providence. In us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth nothing good. We are constrained to cry out, O wretched men that we are, who shall deliver us from the body of this death? We are unworthy to approach thy sacred presence, and to take thy thrice holy name into our sinful and polluted lips. But to whom can we go, O living God, but unto thee, thou alone hast the words of eternal life. We rejoice that thou hast established a covenant with Abraham, and his spiritual seed. We adore thy great and holy name, for the wondrous manner in which this covenant was ratified; not with the blood of bulls and of goats, but with the precious blood of thine only begotten Son, was our redemption secured. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. Most merciful Father, we earnestly beseech thee, to give us a true and living interest in thy covenanted mercy, and help us, by thy blessed Spirit, to experience the present blessedness of thy people. Grant us, O Lord, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein unto the end. May it be our comfort to know that thy covenant can never fail. Neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, can

separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Enable us at all times, to have a conversation and a conduct becoming the gospel, and to live in the exercise of Christian charity and mutual forgiveness. Help us to live in much watchfulness and prayer, to repress every vain and presumptuous desire, and to walk humbly with thee our God. Shield us this day, and all who are dear to us, from every danger. May we pass the time of our sojourning here, in thy fear, and at last meet together in thy heavenly kingdom. Bless, abundantly bless, thy cause, O Lord. May the nations which sit in darkness hear thy voice, and return unto thee and live. May the mountain of the Lord's house be established upon the tops of the mountains, and may all nations flow into it. And may the time at length arrive when they shall join with us in ascribing unto Father, Son, and Spirit, all glory, and dominion, and praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRaise—Psalm CXXXVIII. 3.

Scripture—Acts XI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The great truth announced to us in the first part of this chapter is, that God is no respecter of persons. To prove that Jews and Gentiles were equally objects of his love in the covenant of grace, to Peter, and those who were with him, the Holy Ghost fell on Cornelius and his house, ver. 15. His greatest gift, bestowed equally on Jew and Gentile in the new covenant, exhibits to us the stainless impartiality of the divine character. We learn, also, from the conduct of the persecuted disciples, what was the great theme of their ministry. They preached the Lord Jesus, ver. 20; which, in scripture language, means, justification through the perfect righteousness of the Son of God. This is the great doctrine which the church of Christ has exhibited in every age, and by this doctrine that church will stand or fall. It appears from the account given of the character of Barnabas, ver. 24, that the Holy Spirit lives in and animates believers. The first efforts of the soul, and all its after progress, depend upon the continued influence and the near presence of the heavenly Comforter.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

As it is evident from the account which Peter gives of his introduction to the society of Gentiles, that God is no respecter of persons, we should endeavour to imitate this blessed example. We ought to act with Christian kindness toward all, whatever their condition and circumstances in the world may be. The manner, too, in which Peter endeavoured to satisfy the scruples of the disciples, merits our

attention. He makes a plain and faithful statement of facts, which appears to have produced the best effect. A calm and dispassionate statement of the truth, will, generally, remove groundless prejudices, and is due, at once to our own characters, and the opinions of those who differ from us, especially if they think, on conscientious grounds, that we have done wrong. It has frequently been said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. This is strikingly illustrated in verses 19—21. The very engine which the enemies of Christ's cause employed to destroy it, was overruled by God for its advancement, and the good of his people. Persecution was the means of scattering the seed of life, and of adding to the church those who should be saved. It is a very proper thing to encourage the work of the Lord. The church at Jerusalem, in this respect, set an excellent example, in sending Barnabas to Antioch. Let us imitate their example, and encourage, by our countenance and prayers, those who are but entering the Christian life, and administer to them consolation in their early struggles with sin. At Antioch the disciples were first called Christians. How sadly has this name been misapplied in after times! And what multitudes are there who have only the name! They have none of the living principles of action, of the new motives of obedience, and of the lively graces of the Spirit, which alone entitle any one to be called by the name of Christ. In the concluding verses, we are presented with a beautiful instance of the genuine faith of the Christians at Antioch. A prophet of the Lord had informed them that there would be a great and general dearth. Immediately they set about doing something for the poor saints in Judea. Let us endeavour to walk according to their example, and to do good as we have opportunity, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Such is the spirit which the religion of Christ should inspire. And to a greater or less extent it must animate the hearts of all who have experimentally felt, that he who was rich, for their sake became poor, that they, through his poverty, might be made rich.

PRAYER.

Most gracious Father, we desire, this evening to bow down with reverence at the footstool of thy throne. We are encouraged to draw near unto thee, because thou art no respecter of persons. In every nation, him that feareth thee thou wilt hear, and him that cometh unto thee thou wilt in no wise cast out. O Lord, do thou baptize us with the Holy Ghost, that we may be enabled to see our true condition in thy sight. May he discover to us our guilt and misery, and help us to feel that we are poor, and dying, and polluted sinners before the living God. Grant us, we beseech thee, repentance toward thee our God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. May our sorrow for sin be a true godly sorrow and our repentance such as shall not need to be repented of. May our faith in the Saviour be

real, influential, and permanent, purifying the heart and overcoming the world. We bless thee, O God of consolation, that thou hast provided a Saviour for our souls, in whom we can place our trust. When there was no eye to pity, nor arm to save, thine eye did pity, and thine arm wrought out our salvation. Thou didst so love the world, as to give thine only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. May we gladly receive the message which thou hast sent concerning thy Son, and rest upon him alone, as the Lord our righteousness. Help us, O Lord, to remember that he came to save his people from their sins, and to purify them unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Give us grace daily to set our affections on the things above, and to acquire the spirit of pilgrims and strangers on earth. May we constantly live in the prospect of his second coming, as the Judge of the quick and of the dead, and be enabled, with humility, to say, We know that our Redeemer liveth, and that he will stand at the latter day upon the earth. We have been called by the sacred name of Jesus, but have too often walked in a manner unworthy of his disciples. We have deeply to lament the coldness of our love to him, who loved us unto death. We have deeply to deplore our many backslidings, and our conformity to the practices of this present evil world. Woe is unto us, that we should have disgraced our Christian name, and grieved our heavenly Master. Revive and quicken us, O God, thou God of our salvation. Enable us, henceforth, to adorn the doctrine of our Saviour in all things, by a life and conversation becoming it. May we add unto our faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. We pray this night for all our dear friends, that thou wouldst bless them; for our enemies, that thou wouldst forgive them, and for our benefactors, that thou wouldst reward them. O Lord, remember Zion; defeat the counsels of all her enemies, and make her the joy of the whole earth. Satisfy her poor with bread, and clothe her priests with salvation, that thy saints may shout aloud for joy; give thy Son the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. Merciful Father, to thy protecting care we commend ourselves through the darkness of the night. May the everlasting arms be around and underneath us, and may thy statutes be our songs by night as well as by day. Spare us to

the light of another morning; and fit us for every duty and every change. These are our prayers, O Lord. In mercy hear and answer us, for the sake of our only and all-sufficient Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLVII. 7.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS XIV. 17—20; XV.

REMARKS.

2 KINGS XIV. ver. 17—22. The highest of this world's honours are enjoyed but for a moment, while they who are raised to their possession, oftentimes find themselves only raised to a multiplicity of cares and sorrows. He who has been exalted to a throne, may soon be driven from it; a foul conspiracy may cut him off in the very midst of his days, or death at least, coming in the ordinary course of nature, will lay all his glory in the dust. Not so shall it be with the glory that is to be revealed to the believer in Jesus. The kingdom that is to be given to him is a kingdom that cannot be moved; the crown that is to be put on his head no foe shall be ever able to pluck from his brow; while the joys connected with its inheritance will be as enriching and satisfying as they will be lasting. Let us, then, be found earnestly striving to be made heirs of this inheritance.

Ver. 23—29. What a solemn lesson should we learn from the history of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, of whom it is here again with such awful emphasis repeated, that 'he made Israel to sin,' and in whose wicked footsteps Jeroboam II. but too faithfully trod! It was the aim of his whole policy, for the sake of securing himself in the kingdom, to alienate the ten tribes from the pure and spiritual worship of the living and true God; and but too successful he was in effecting his impious purpose. The influence of his counsels and efforts opened a floodgate of iniquity, which continued to overrun the land long after he himself had been mingling in the dust, and brought miseries innumerable, and at last utter ruin, upon the people whom he had seduced. Are we then, any of us, either as parents, or masters, or magistrates, placed in stations of responsibility? How careful should we be to use our influence and authority for checking sin, and not encouraging it, and to do what in us lies, by our counsels, our example, and our prayers, to win others to the love and obedience of the gospel! Let us take heed, whatever our station or relation may be, that we incur not, in any measure, the fearful guilt of having the blood of souls required at our hand.

2 KINGS XV. ver. 1—8; 32—38. Amid the iniquity that so much abounded in the kingdom of Israel, it is refreshing even yet to look back to the different conduct exhibited by many of the kings of Judah, and to see, as in the case of Azariah, called also Uzziah, and Jotham his son, 'that there was some good thing in their hearts towards the Lord.'

Instances of this kind are like so many green spots, on which the eye may delightedly rest, in the midst of all the moral bleakness which the page of sacred history would only otherwise present. The cause of Azariah's leprosy we have fully stated in 2 Chron. xxvi. 16—20. How noble to be found thus standing out from a world lying in wickedness, as witnesses for God and his truth! 'Them that thus honour him he will honour, while they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.' Are we then, by such a conduct, striving to give glory unto the Lord?

Ver. 8—31. Into what a scene of misery, cruelty, and bloodshed would this world be turned, if the evil passions of the human heart were only allowed of God to have an unrestrained license! Of the six kings of Israel, mentioned in this chapter, we read that four of them were conspired against and murdered; while Menahem, another of them, is recorded to have perpetrated atrocious cruelties, from the very recital of which the heart is made to recoil. How ought we then to prize that gospel which is so emphatically the gospel of peace, and whose holy lessons, brought home and applied by the divine Spirit unto the heart, lead to the mortification of every sinful passion, and teach us 'to be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another.' O that its pure and peaceful spirit may be more and more infused into each one of us, that we may learn to live together, and love one another as brethren!

PRAYER.

O almighty and most merciful Father, spared as we have been to see the return of a new day, we would now come and present those bodies which thou hast preserved in health, and refreshed with sleep, as living sacrifices before thee. Quicken our hearts at this time by the gracious influences of thy Spirit, that the flame of heavenly gratitude may be enkindled within us, and that we may be enabled to realize more deeply the magnitude of our obligations to thy unceasing kindness. Lord, how unworthy are we in ourselves of the least token of thy favour? We would remember that all our mercies, temporal as well as spiritual, flow to us from thy rich and sovereign grace, and through him who is thine only begotten and well-beloved Son. In his name, then, would we at this time present our humble but heartfelt tribute of thanksgiving. May it be accepted in thy sight. And while, O righteous Father, we would render thee praise for thy mercies, we would also, with all earnestness, supplicate thy grace. How multiplied are our needs in this respect? We naturally inherit, each one of us, a heart that is deceitful and desperately wicked, alienated from thy love, full of the seeds of every evil passion, and continually prone to betray us into iniquity. We beseech thee, then, to create in us clean hearts, and to renew within us right spirits. O may thy Holy Spirit

be vouchsafed to effect that great moral change in our souls, without which thou hast assured us that we can never enter into thy kingdom. Make us therefore new creatures in Christ Jesus. May we not only be justified by his righteousness, but transformed into his likeness. Clothe us with that spirit of humility, and meekness, and holiness, and love, which, in the days of his flesh, he so pre-eminently exemplified, and may we be enabled, through thy grace, to become crucified unto the world, and to live more and more with our desires and affections in heaven. Be pleased to take us under thy guidance and guardianship this day. Be aiding to us in the fulfilment of all its duties. Help us to resist its temptations, and let not the enemy of our souls be able to prevail against us. We would desire to recognise thee in all our ways, and to feel that we are continually in thy presence. O Lord, our strength and our refuge, do thou thyself uphold our goings, that we may be made to rejoice always before thee. Dwell in this our family, and be the covenant God of every member of it. Dwell in the families of our friends; yea, become the God of all the families of the earth, bringing them nigh unto thyself through the blood of atonement, and making them heirs of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Comfort all who are in trouble, and may those whose days are about to be numbered, be prepared for death, and judgment, and eternity. Hear our prayers, forgive our sins, and accept of us in the Son of thy love, to whom, with thyself and the eternal Spirit, be glory everlasting. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 3—8.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XII.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—3; 20—25. The Herod here spoken of was the grandson of Herod the Great, who, at the birth of our Lord, commanded all the children of Bethlehem to be put to death, in the hope of slaying also the holy child Jesus. He appears to have inherited the cruel spirit as well as the name of his wicked ancestor. Having first killed James, the brother of John, and seeing that it pleased the Jews, he cast Peter into prison too, doubtless with the view of speedily subjecting him to the like sad doom. But his murderous purpose was most miraculously frustrated, and all his attempts to hinder the gospel brought to nought; while he himself was soon overtaken by the singular vengeance of heaven, and perished like his grandfather, a monument of the divine displeasure. Awfully indeed was it verified in his case, that 'pride goeth before a fall.' He was literally 'eaten of worms!' How fearful a thing is

it to fall into the hands of that God who is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity! Let us learn then to stand in awe, and not sin.

Ver. 4—19. The history of Peter, in this chapter, is fraught with lessons of a most instructive, as well as encouraging character, to the heart of the true believer. We may learn from it, 1. That they who would serve the Lord faithfully must expect tribulation. 'If ye were of the world,' says Christ to his disciples, 'the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' Affliction, however, in whatever shape it may come to the people of God, is only the parental rod with which he chastens them for their profit. 2. We see how easy it is for God to give deliverance to his people, and how that deliverance may often be at hand when least they anticipate it. Are we then of the household of faith? Let us rejoice that whatever our tribulations may be for a season, the time of our complete redemption is fast drawing nigh. And more enraptured still than even Peter was, when he felt his chains at once broken off, and himself free as the air which he breathed, will every believing soul be, with its first tastings of that heavenly felicity into which it shall be ushered, when, having quitted its tenement of clay, and burst asunder every band of corruption, it shall be wafted on angels' wings into Abraham's bosom. 3. Here too we learn how true it is, as taught in scripture, that 'angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.' How pleasing thus to know that these holy beings feel a most lively interest in every thing connected with the good of God's people, and are commissioned to exercise a special guardianship over them. 'The angels of the Lord encompass round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.' And our Lord's own declaration is, 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father, who is in heaven.' And, 4. The efficacy of prayer is here most impressively taught to us. While Peter was kept in prison, 'prayer,' we are told, 'was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.' And it was while the disciples were engaged in this very exercise that its answer was vouchsafed, and Peter came and knocked at the door of the place where they were assembled. Let this then encourage us to pray always, and not to faint, assured that, sooner or later, our prayers shall be answered, and that whatsoever we ask, agreeable to the Father's will, and in the name of Christ, believing, it shall be given unto us. May the Spirit himself help us at all times to offer the prayer of faith, and make intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

PRAYER.

O thou who art the God of our lives, and the length of our days, and the giver of every good and perfect gift that we receive, we would, this evening, bow ourselves with the deepest reverence before thee, and call upon our souls, and

all that is within us, to bless and to magnify thy holy name. Another week is now about to close upon us, and we come to render unto thee our unfeigned thanks for all its undeserved mercies. Thou hast watched over us in all our goings; thou hast supplied all our wants; thou hast kept our eyes from tears and our feet from falling; and it is because thy gracious hand has every moment sustained us that we are the living still before thee. And blessed be thy name for the daily access which we have had to the counsels and comforts of thy word; for the privilege of communing with thee in prayer and supplication, and for all the glorious and cheering hopes of the gospel of thy Son, by which our hearts have been made glad. Pardon, merciful Father, wherein we have in any respect rendered an unbecoming return for these thy mercies towards us. Alas, how ready have we been to forget the hand from which they have flowed! How prone to sin against thee every hour! Wert thou to set our iniquities and sins in full array against us, we could not answer unto thee for one of a thousand; even our own hearts condemn us, and thou art greater than our hearts, and knowest all things. Have mercy upon us, therefore, O our God, and remember not our transgressions against us. May we be washed, and justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the power of the divine Spirit. And give us grace, we beseech thee, to live more and more as becometh thy redeemed. May we never be ashamed to confess Christ before men; may we be found to glory only in his cross; may we be ready, if need be, to bear reproach and persecution for his sake; may his love be so abundantly shed abroad in our hearts, that we may not even count our lives dear unto us, if so be that we may be enabled to finish our course with joy. We would rejoice that if called to endure tribulation, thou hast promised to be with us, and to make our very afflictions to work for our good. Thou givest thine angels charge concerning thy people to keep them, and to deliver them, and to lead them at last into glory. Why, then, should our hearts be troubled? We will wait upon the Lord and be of good courage; we will be strong in him, and in the power of his might; we will not fear what man can do unto us; we will believe that over satan himself we shall be made more than conquerors. Take us under thy care, heavenly Father, this night, and if it please thee to spare us to a coming Sabbath, may we be enabled to rejoice in it; may its rest be refreshing, and its services precious unto our souls; and may we meet with thee, and be blessed

of thee in the ordinances of thine own appointment. Be gracious to all our friends; forgive our enemies; comfort the afflicted; be near unto the dying. And make Christ's cause to prosper every where. Hear these our imperfect prayers, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK. SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 5.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXXVIII. 25—48.

REMARKS.

How solemnly instructive is the history of God's ancient Israel, an interesting portion of which, during their wanderings in the wilderness, is here, by the psalmist, presented to our notice! We are often ready, perhaps, to conceive of this people, when we read the record of God's gracious dealings towards them on the one hand, and their multiplied rebellions and backslidings on the other, as if they had been a people sinners above all others, and to whose guilt we should in vain search for a parallel. But, alas, humbling though the truth may indeed be, we ought to bear in mind that their history in this respect is but an apt emblem of our own; that naturally we inherit hearts as corrupt, and carnal, and wicked as theirs, and that the enmity that is in us, if not rooted out or restrained by the grace of God, will be ever ready to lead us into the like sinful rebellions against him.

In the brief rehearsal which the psalmist here gives to us of what was done for the generation that came out of Egypt, he reminds us, ver. 25—33. that though the Lord fed them miraculously with manna from heaven, so that they might thus be said to eat, as it were, 'angel's food,' they were nevertheless dissatisfied; that when they wickedly lusted after flesh, and God gave them the gratification of that lust, he made it at the same time the very instrument of their punishment; and that failing to be reclaimed by one judgment, they were visited with others, so that it might be most emphatically declared of them, 'their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.' Let us beware then of being chargeable, in like manner, with the foul sin of ingratitude to God, especially in regard to that spiritual manna which he has sent down to feed our immortal souls; let us ask nothing of him that we may consume it upon our lusts; and when he lifts the rod of his afflictions or judgments over us, O let us at once hear its voice, lest a worse evil come upon us.

Ver. 34—39. The psalmist farther shows us how insincere and heartless were those professions of repentance, which were again and again made on the part of the men of Israel. They flowed not from any right views or feelings of the evil of sin. They were the mere effect of those convictions wrought in them by the terrors of God's power. And hence

he who could at once look into the inmost chambers of the heart, saw that, amid the outward expressions of humiliation and penitence, however seemingly sincere, there was still too often nought but flattery and falsehood within. 'Their heart was not right with God, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.' How wonderful his long-suffering and mercy, then, that still he should have borne with them, and been ready to forgive them, and not come forth in his wrath to consume them utterly! Who is a God like unto him? But are there not many in those days who are found liable to have fixed upon them the very charge of guilt here referred to? Convictions of sin, then, felt merely in times of severe affliction, are no satisfactory evidence that the heart has been made right with God.

Ver. 40—48. The Israelites, we see, were yet farther guilty in questioning, as it were, the very power of Jehovah to bring them into the promised rest. How dishonouring and impious thus to 'limit the holy One of Israel, more especially after having so recently witnessed all the signal miracles which he had wrought for them in Egypt, and the chief of which are here recapitulated! What need have we all of us, then, to guard against such an evil heart of unbelief, and to pray earnestly that we may be delivered from it! It is this which lies at the foundation of all sin, and fearful will be its consequences unto those who live and die under its influence. 'He that believeth hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him.'

PRAYER.

Adored be thy name, O our God, that another sabbath has been made to dawn upon us, and that again we have been permitted to come and meditate upon the holy lessons of thy word. We would now entreat thee to impress these lessons upon our hearts, and to make them truly profiting unto us. Help us to come before thee at this time, deeply conscious of our own unworthiness; may we feel, while we confess, that we are indeed of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. How multiplied have been our sins against thee! Like thy backsliding and rebellious people of old, we have been prone, under the influence of our natural corruption and unbelief, to turn aside from thee, to prove unthankful for thy mercies, to seek the gratification of our own carnal lusts, to murmur under the righteous dispensations of thy providence, and to flatter thee with our lips, while our hearts have been still estranged from thee. At this time, then, do we bow ourselves before thee, O thou fountain of all grace, not only to acknowledge that we have thus sinned against thee, and that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing; but to implore that renovating power of thy Spirit by which we may have the corruption that is in us rooted out, and be

enabled to mortify the flesh, with all its affections and lusts. Adored be thy name for the promise of the Spirit to begin and carry on a work of sanctification in our souls, and to perfect that which concerns us. Give us, in our blessed experience, to know the fulfilment of this promise. May he enlighten our understandings, purify our hearts, renew our wills, and bring every thought, and affection, and desire into the obedience of the gospel of thy Son. And may we thus be kept steadfast in the covenant of our God, and enabled to let our light shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may also be led to glorify thee, our Father in heaven. On this holy sabbath, set apart to commemorate the glorious resurrection of our once crucified, but now exalted Saviour, may we have grace given to us to engage in a suitable spirit, in all its sacred and solemn services, whether in the sanctuary, or in the family, or in the closet. May we this day have our fellowship with thee, and with thy Son, Christ Jesus. May our souls be greatly refreshed and comforted in waiting upon thee. O make thyself known to us, even as thou dost unto thine own, and enrich our souls abundantly with the blessings of thy grace. We would entreat thee also in behalf of our brethren. May this be a day whereon multitudes shall be born again unto the Lord, and of whom it shall be said, that salvation has come unto them. And may the hearts of thy saints be more and more established in the faith. For this purpose, bear testimony to the preaching of the word, and the dispensation of ordinances every where, giving unto thy servants, the ministers of the everlasting gospel, to declare with all faithfulness the words of eternal life. Lord, we now look up unto thee for all needed wisdom, and grace, and strength. O send us not away empty from thy presence. Bless us, and all the objects of our affections; yea, do thou bless us very abundantly. And we ask all in the name of Jesus thy Son, and our Saviour. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRaise—PSALM LXXVIII. 68.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXXVIII. 49—72.

REMARKS.

The psalmist here continues the history of the chosen people, glancing at some of its more remarkable events, down to the period at which the psalm was written. Ver. 49—58. When the Lord had multiplied his plagues on Egypt, (see Exod. vii—xii.) and at last sent forth his destroying angel to slay all

the first-born, the children of Israel were allowed to go forth from a land where they had felt so long and so fearfully the iron hand of oppression. And though to that generation it was never given, because of their sinful murmurings and rebellions, to enter into the rest of Canaan, yet even over them God exercised, for many a long year in the wilderness, the most tender and watchful care, following and feeding them like a shepherd, and bringing their children to the full possession of the inheritance which he had promised. But no sooner were they thus quietly established in the land, from which the heathen had been driven out, than, like their sinning fathers, they began to 'tempt and provoke God' to anger; they kept not his testimonies; they bowed themselves before the idols which heathen nations worshipped; they were 'like a deceitful bow,' which the marksman can never for a moment trust. Are we ready then to condemn such criminal conduct on the part of God's people of old? O let us take heed that the guilt in no measure lie at our door—that our hearts be not found, in like manner, going after idols.

Ver. 59—66. When Israel rebelled against God, of which their history furnishes so many humiliating instances, they were made to feel that sin is an evil and bitter thing indeed; judgments failed not to follow upon their transgressions; their enemies were allowed to triumph over them; and the very ark, called 'the strength and glory of God,' and the symbol of his presence amongst them, was taken (1 Sam. iv. 11.) by the Philistines, as if to give awful intimation, that for a season his favour had been altogether withdrawn from them. But judgment is God's strange work, and that in which he has no pleasure. He punished his people, but he did not cast them off. 'He awaked as one out of sleep,' and hastened to their help, when their enemies, the instruments of his wrath, would have ground them with oppression to the very dust. And if God spared not then the chosen seed of old, when they sinned against him, neither, let it be remembered, will he spare us, if we are found to walk in their ungodly steps. 'His face is still set against them that do evil, to cut off the very remembrance of them from the earth.' Let his judgments, then, executed on sinners, in all generations, speak a solemn voice of warning unto every one of us, and be looked to as beacons, in mercy set up, to persuade us to flee from the wrath that is to come. But while God will thus assuredly punish with everlasting destruction, the impenitent, the unbelieving, the ungodly; he will bring his own chosen and redeemed out of all trouble; he will hear them when, humbled and contrite, they cry unto him from the depths of their afflictions; he will deliver them from the hand of every enemy, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads.

Ver. 67—72. True believers may thus rejoice, that the Lord will assuredly never leave nor forsake them. For they are of the flock of him who is the 'good Shepherd,' and of whom David, with all his integrity, and tenderness, and skill, first as 'following the ewes,' and then as king of Israel, was but a faint and imperfect type. Let us only ever hear, then, the voice of this Shepherd, and we shall have

nothing to fear. His counsel will guide us, his bounty will provide for us, his power will sustain us, his love will comfort us; and at last we shall be taken into that heavenly fold, into which, he can never come, and where 'the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed us, and lead us unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.' Behold then our encouragements to abide in Christ, and to be faithful unto him, even unto death. May the Lord himself enable us so to do.

PRAYER.

O most mighty and merciful God, by whose inspiration all scripture has been given, and whose teaching alone is saving and unto profit, be pleased to give us a right understanding, and to help us to make self-application of the solemn truths which we have now been hearing from a portion of thy word. May we see, in the continual proneness of thy people of old to backslide from thee, and to forget all thy mercies, what need we have to watch always, that we sin not in like manner. We would remember that we have hearts in us alike evil and deceitful, that naturally we are no better than they, and that, if unrenewed by the quickening influences of thy grace, we will be equally ready to be led captive of satan at his will, and to be hurried on in the downward path of sin. O fill our hearts at this time with godly sorrow for all our sins; give us to see sin in its true characters of vileness and guilt; and may we be ready to lay our hands on our mouths, and our mouths in the very dust, and to confess before thee, that we are unclean, and ready to perish. But adored be thy name, that though we have sinned, still there is mercy for us; that though we have all like sheep gone astray, thou hast sent thine own Son, as the good Shepherd, to invite us back to thy fold, and to the full and everlasting possession of that favour which we had forfeited. Eternal praise for this interposition of divine mercy in our behalf! thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift! We will now, believing, look unto the cross of Jesus. We will rejoice that the very guiltiest of us may find grace through him. And we will seek to be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. And that we may be enabled to live as thy redeemed in Christ, we would entreat thee, O our God, to give us grace according to our need, and to bless unto us all the solemn services in which, in this thy holy day, we have been engaged. May these leave a hallowing influence on each one of our hearts,

and on the hearts of those who have worshipped with us. Bless the preaching of thy word throughout the church universal. Wherever the name of Christ has been this day named, may men learn to depart from iniquity. Prosper thy Son's cause in this corner of thy vineyard, and throughout the whole world. Let thy Spirit be poured out both on pastors and people, and let thy work be greatly revived. Accept of our thanksgivings for all the mercies of another Sabbath. Forgive our sins and shortcomings in duty. Be gracious to us as a family, and make each one of us members of the household of faith. Sanctify thy dealings to the afflicted. Prepare the aged and dying for a coming eternity. Train up a young and rising generation in thy fear, and may they be early led to seek Jesus. May all who are placed in stations of authority, from the throne downwards, seek to glorify thee in them. And let thy will be done upon the earth, even as it is done in heaven. And now unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, one God, be glory, dominion, and praise everlasting. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM IV. 1 or 6.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS XVI.

REMARKS.

In this chapter we have detailed the history of Ahaz, which presents no exception from the sad apostacy manifested by the kings of Judah and Israel. And when we read the sad memorial attached to almost every name, 'and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord,' we have the truth strongly impressed on our minds, that the possession of earthly honours is very dangerous to the best interests of the soul—amid the seductions of pleasure, amid the gaities and splendours that are gathered about a throne. O! how difficult must it be to maintain a Christian character, or to keep up spiritual communion with God! and how much is the danger to the soul increased when the possessor of the throne is in youth, and therefore less inclined to resist the follies and the vanities that encompass the path? Ahaz early in life became king, but he found, as all will find, that the occupier of a throne cannot be exempted from his share of the vicissitudes of life; yea, even that as the highest tree of the forest, rearing its head above the rest in lofty magnificence, is most exposed to the wintry storm so also do those who are elevated above their fellow-men, experience that they are most assailed by the storm of adversity and trial. King Ahaz was visited by the invasion of the confederate kings of Syria and Israel, and although they were unable to overcome him, yet he had been sore pressed by them, and

sought the help of the king of Assyria. But we often purchase help at a large price; subjection, cowardly and cringing conduct, and the sacrifice of principle, are often the price paid for the assistance of ungodly men; and O what base arts do men resort unto to preserve themselves from worldly calamities. Ahas despoiled the house of the Lord, in order to furnish him with money sufficient to purchase the friendship of the Assyrian monarch. And thus are men ready to barter away what is holy, and spiritual, and eternal, to give what belongeth to the Lord for the sake of obtaining some present paltry worldly advantage. The favour of man is too often bought at a dear cost, even at nothing less than the loss of God's favour and love, and to procure some present enjoyment, or to keep off some threatened evil, do we not oftentimes put in jeopardy our eternal welfare? we rob God that we may secure some present peace to our souls. Such are the doings of sinners and of unthinking Christians. They intermeddle with what is not their own, but God's. They give away their time, and their talents, and their Christian privileges, and their spiritual possessions, and their dearest principles, to procure, perhaps, the good opinion and the good will of their fellow-men; they will ally themselves even to the wicked of the earth, in order to promote their worldly interests.

But the genuine believer will not seek to purchase any man's favour, or any secular advantage, by risking the loss of God's favour, which is better than life; neither will he take of God's property to purchase the help or the friendship of any wicked man.

PRAYER.

O thou God of all grace, be pleased to listen to our prayers, and to permit our humble cry to find acceptance with thee. It is through the Mediator of the new covenant that we desire now, and at all times, to come, because we are assured by thy word that he is the alone way. We know that our services cannot be accepted, neither will our petitions obtain entrance into heaven, unless Jesus be regarded in all that we do and say. And we bless thy name, O Lord, that this is thine own wise arrangement. For in Christ we have one that can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; one that can sympathize in all the sorrows and tribulations of his people; and one that has all prevalency of intercession in heaven, and all power on earth, to keep his own in their sojournings here below. We earnestly pray, O living God, that the Spirit may give unto each of us a saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, making us partakers of his redemption, children of God by adoption, and heirs of the everlasting inheritance. O let us never covet the riches or the dignities of this world, but be satisfied and contented with whatever station thou hast assigned us in the army

of the faithful. Forbid, Lord, that we should barter away our privileges, our hopes, our eternal interests, for any advantage whatever that this world can give us; and O give us grace, we pray thee, to form a right Christian estimate of the overwhelming importance of the things of eternity, compared with the things of time, so that whether we be the possessors of a throne or the occupants of a humble dwelling, we may consult the best interests of our undying souls. O thou King of kings, direct all that are seated on earthly thrones, and let not the possession of an earthly crown in any way prevent them from seeking after that crown of glory that fadeth not away. Give thy Spirit and thy grace unto all men. Give the heathen to thy Son for his inheritance. Supply the wants of the poor, the afflicted, and the dying. Reclaim the wandering; satisfy the doubting; enlighten the inquiring soul. We give thee thanks that thou hast opened our eyes to the light of another day. Guide us during the hours of business, of duty, and of trial, this day, and forsake us never, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXVI.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XIII. 1—25.

REMARKS.

Here we have the selection by the Holy Ghost, and the setting apart by the church, of Barnabas and Paul for the work of the ministry. Their mission was to the Gentile world, where there lay stretched out before them a wide and barren field, but being accompanied by the help of the Holy Spirit, and by the prayers of the church, they had nothing to fear, they went forth to their labour cheerfully. At Paphos they met with what every faithful Christian minister will meet, viz. opposition and encouragement. Sergius Paulus, the deputy of that country, being desirous to hear the word of God, sent for the apostles, but Elymas, a Jew and a sorcerer, sought to hinder him, and 'to turn him away from the faith.' How great is the sin, and how fearful will be the punishment of those who will not receive Christ themselves, and who seek also to keep others away. Is it not enough that impenitent sinners have to answer for themselves on the judgment-day; must they have the blood of others also upon their heads; must they have their consciences burdened and tortured throughout eternity, with the reproaches and condemnation of those whom they have kept away from Jesus? Let believers also take heed, lest in any way such guilt be theirs. Elymas was sternly rebuked by Paul, for sinners must be told what they are, without any hesitation on the part of God's ministering servants. It is kindness and compassion to their souls to do so.

The sorcerer was struck blind. The punishment almost instantaneously followed the commission of the sin; such flagrant wickedness demanded signal and immediate judgment. Let us tremble lest God visit us also in this way; lest he not only chastise us, but hurry us away to an eternal world, in the very perpetration of some heinous iniquity. The conversion of Sergius Paulus almost immediately followed. He saw God's hand revealed against sin, and he 'believed.' God employs a variety of means for the conversion of sinners. Some are drawn to Christ by the 'cords of love,' and some by the judgments and 'terrors of the Lord.' He alone that made the human soul knows the best means of access to it.

At Antioch, Paul preached his first sermon, which is full of interest. He addressed himself specially to the Jews, and after briefly narrating the leading points of their eventful history, he spoke to them of 'the Saviour Jesus.' He knew on what subject his audience required to be enlightened, and therefore he 'preached Christ.' This was the burden of his discourse, the centre to which all his remarks converged, the sum and substance of all that he taught. And herein Paul is an example to every one that proclaims the gospel. Christ must be preached if we would be found faithful, and Christ must be received if we would be saved. He must be exhibited in all his mediatorial character, and offered fully and freely to every sinner. If this be not done, all preaching is lifeless, profitless, and vain, and the hearers will perish for lack of 'the bread of life.' May the Lord help every ministering servant to be faithful in this great work!

PRAYER.

Almighty Father, we thank thee that thou didst, in the times of old, send forth labourers into the Gentile vineyard, and in great mercy didst condescend to proclaim the tidings of salvation to those who were afar off. We bless thee this night, that the message of peace and of pardon, through the Lord Jesus Christ, hath reached this distant isle of the Gentiles, and hath gladdened the heart of many a sinner; and we give thee thanks on behalf of every one converted unto Jesus; of every one whose soul has been cheered by the promises and consolations of the gospel; of every one who has fought, or may be yet fighting, the good fight of faith. O Lord, do thou lead each one of us, now before thee, to Jesus. Give us all to drink copiously from the fountain which himself hath filled, for the refreshment and salvation of his people. May we thenceforth obtain cleansing, and pardon, and peace. May the Spirit daily enlighten us progressively in the things of Christ, and may each day, as it passes over our heads, find us better prepared for our eternal home. O Lord, forgive wherein we have this day forgotten thee. Every day, and in every thing, we offend, and therefore we need thy pardoning mercy, and thy

sanctifying grace. Justly, O Lord, mightest thou punish us, even in the very act of committing sin, but we are monuments of thy sparing love. We thank thee, O God, that thou hast appointed in this land thy ministering servants, to proclaim to us the glad tidings of salvation. O let them all be faithful to thee, and to the souls of men. Give them courage, prudence, faith, and love. May Christ be preached by all, and may the gospel have free course, and be glorified. Gather in, O Lord, the dispersed of Israel, and with them the fullness of the Gentile world. Be with all who have gone forth in mission to the lands of idolatry. May they be successful, by the help of the Spirit, in turning sinners from darkness to light. Bless the preached gospel in our own land; let all ranks, from the Queen on the throne, to the meanest subject, be living under the influence of the religion of Jesus. Bless all, O Lord, for whom we ought to pray. And now take us under thy charge during the silence of the night, watch over our dwelling, forsake us never, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 4.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS XVII.

REMARKS.

In this chapter we have the history of Hoshea, king of Israel, and cotemporary with Ahaz. In his character there is a mitigating circumstance, viz. 'that he did not evil as the kings of Israel that were before him.' But the kings and people of Israel had now filled up the measure of their iniquity. The cup of God's wrath was full, and the time of their banishment into a foreign land was now come. They must again go into captivity, because of their sins. As a nation, they must now be banished, for nations can only be punished in this world. Let us ever bear in mind, that national sins will always be followed by national punishments, in the present state of existence. And looking at our own land in this view, we have reason to fear that the anger of Jehovah is settling down upon us, because, as a nation, we have undervalued our Christian privileges, and forsaken our covenant God.

We find in the punitive judgments of God, that the remedy is always suited to the disease. Captivity alone was fitted to be an adequate punishment and remedy for the heaven-daring sins of backsliding Israel. Removal from their beloved land, with all its holy ordinances and endeared associations, could alone cure their apostacy. In the same way, virtually, may God deal with us, if we profit not by our spiritual advantages. He may, indeed, leave us in our land; but in punishment of our sins, he may deprive us of our holy ordinances—our means of

grace—our sabbaths—our bibles—our sanctuaries; and leaving us barren and desolate, he may give all these things to some other nation that will 'bring forth the fruit thereof.' Let us pray, God to avert this calamity while yet there is space given.

Although God is not obliged to give any account of his matters to us, yet, in condescension, he has frequently done so, that men might be assured of the wisdom and righteousness of his dealings. It is an act of great kindness, if he make known to us here below, the reason of his dispensations, but if he hide it, we must not murmur, being satisfied that 'what we know not now we shall know hereafter.' In this chapter, he distinctly tells his ancient people, that idolatry was their crying sin, and the cause of their captivity in Babylon. In like manner, he frequently tells the afflicted soul what sins have brought distress upon it, and wherefore it is that God is contending with it. Let us be glad and rejoice, even while suffering under God's chastening hand, if he condescend to tell us the reason of his chastisement, and if he bring to our remembrance and make us tremble under those sins which have brought affliction upon our souls; for God does not thus act towards the unawakened sinner, but allows him to sleep on in spiritual death.

As every one of those nations with which the king of Assyria peopled the cities of Samaria, and who were plagued by God, had their own peculiar idols, so do we find that each one of us has some special object of idolatry, something that comes between us and our God, something that is dishonouring to him, and ruinous to our souls' interests, something, in a word, that prevents us from enjoying in our souls the full benefits of the gospel dispensation. Let us search and try our ways, and seek to cast out from our hearts, by the help of the Spirit of Christ, those abominations which God hateth.

PRAYER.

O living God, behold us, as a family, bending down in humble submission at thine own footstool; unto thee, seated on the throne of the universe, would we seek to yield all praise, and glory, and thanksgiving. And at the same time, would we feel our utter unworthiness even to speak to thee in prayer. Have mercy on us, O Lord, for, as a nation, and as individuals, we have all forsaken thee; and there are written in thy book of remembrance our manifold provocations against thee; and we feel the number and the aggravations of our sins to be so great, as to be a thick cloud between thee and us. But yet, Lord, thy mercy is great, thy love to a world of perishing sinners has been wondrously manifested, in giving thine own beloved Son to die for the sins, and to rise again for the justification, of his people. On his all-perfect atonement we rest every hope of acceptance with thee, and of eternal life. And we pray that thou wouldst give each of us an enlarging acquaintance with Christ, a believing, realizing, saving view of the

sufficiency, the fullness, the freeness of his salvation. May the Spirit enable us to know more and more of the love of Christ, of his willingness to receive and to save every returning sinner; of the purity, the spirituality, and the extent of his law, and of the necessity of cleaving unto him with an unfaltering obedience. And, O Lord, let thy chastening hand upon us, or upon ours, whensoever thou sendest it, bring us always nearer unto thee. Spare our land, good Lord, we pray thee, from underlying thine anger, because of our national sins. Remember us in mercy. We have sinned, O Lord, we have sinned, and deserve to have our candlestick removed out of its place. But we would plead with thee, to avert thy merited judgments. Turn not away in anger from us. We commend unto thee all whom we ought to bear on our hearts at a throne of grace. Grant to our friends thine abiding friendship, to our enemies thy forgiveness, to the mourners in Zion thy consolation, to the dying the hopes of a blessed eternity. Put an end to idolatry in every heart, and in every land. Let the influence of divine truth prevail. Hear us, O God, and guide us this day, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 17.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XIII. 26—52.

REMARKS.

In this portion of scripture, Paul continues his discourse to the Jews and people of Antioch. He had just spoken of Jesus, the Saviour, and while the minds of his audience were in contemplation of this glorious object, he fervently declares to them the personality of the gospel message; 'to you is the word of this salvation sent.' To every sinner that hears that word it is sent, just if he were the only sinner on the earth's surface that needed salvation. How great, therefore, is the responsibility of every one that lives in this Christian land!

Paul goes on fearlessly to detail the unjust condemnation of Christ, by the rulers at Jerusalem. Although they found no fault in him, yet did they crucify him upon the accursed tree; and the Jews experience, even till this day, the anger of God, because they condemned the Lord of glory. The apostle goes on to speak of the burial and resurrection of Christ, and proves from two passages in the Psalms, that he could see no corruption. Of the certainty of his resurrection, there could be no doubt, for 'he was seen many days,' by many competent witnesses, and there is no fact more clearly established on unquestionable testimony, than that Christ was raised from the dead. All the attempts of unbe-

lievers to disprove it have most signally failed, and it stands forth prominently the crowning evidence of the truth of the religion of Jesus, and of the approbation and acceptance of his finished work by God the Father. Christians ought to study much and make themselves well acquainted with the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, for it is intimately connected with their own, as Paul clearly proves, 1 Cor. xv.

In the conclusion of his discourse, the apostle preaches the forgiveness of sins, and full justification through Christ, and he most earnestly cautions sinners against despising the work of the Saviour. Knowing the value of the soul, and the freeness of salvation, he was anxious to win over his audience, and to conclude a bargain between their souls and Christ. At the same time, he boldly charged home upon them their great unbelief; he denounced them as despisers of the mercy of God, and as they stood despising and wondering, he told them that they would perish in their sins. How distressing the thought, that many are placed within sight of the cross, and within hearing of the gospel salvation, and yet do obstinately rush upon destruction. Let us take heed, lest such condemnation be ours.

The effect of Paul's preaching was various. 'The Gentiles, and many Jews, and religious proselytes, followed Paul and Barnabas,' being apparently won over by the mighty power of God, manifested in the apostle; for God will always in some degree bless the faithful preaching of the everlasting gospel. But the unbelieving Jews, when they witnessed in the increasing multitudes the success of the apostles' doctrine, when 'almost the whole city had assembled to hear the word of God, were filled with envy, contradicting and blaspheming those things which were spoken by Paul.' Notice here that it is an evidence of the success of the gospel, when ungodly men are stirred up in madness against it, for then the enemy of souls finds that his empire is invaded, and he sets his agents a-working, to counteract the purposes of God's grace. But all is unavailing, and the preachers of the gospel, like Paul and Barnabas, relying upon the assured promises of God, should only wax bolder and bolder, as the waves of opposition come rolling in; and although expelled from one city, let them go unto another, publishing the word of the Lord.

PRAYER.

Holy Lord God Almighty, we rejoice with joy exceedingly that thou hast revealed Christ as the salvation of sinners, and that although with wicked hands he was crucified and slain, yet thou didst raise him up again from the dead on the third day. Let our souls now rejoice that thou hast accepted his finished work, and that all power is now given to him in heaven and on earth. O may we all find that we have willingly taken Christ to reign over us, and that now he is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Give us, O give us, blessed God, to believe on him to the saving of our souls; to feel that we are

crucified with Christ, and that the life we now live in the flesh, is a life of faith on the Son of God. May we have through his blood the forgiveness of our sins, and a title secured to us to the everlasting inheritance. O may the Spirit seal our souls unto the day of eternal redemption, and may it be our happy experience to feel that we have passed from death to life, and are now fairly set out on the road that leadeth to heaven's blessedness. Keep us, O Lord, from the sin of despising Christ, or of neglecting his great salvation; and may we ever bear in mind, that reckoning must be made at the great day. Clothe us with the Redeemer's righteousness, that on the solemn day of judgment we may stand forth before an assembled universe, acquitted, accepted, and saved with an everlasting salvation. O Lord, we would not this night pray for ourselves only, but would entreat thee to visit all men with thy benign salvation. Let every sinner that is yet out of Christ, become the subject of thy saving grace. Establish thine own people. Bless thine own heritage, and build them for ever. We commit unto thee, O Lord, those connected with us by the ties of grace or of blood. Suit the influences of thy Spirit to them all. Preserve from dangers, spiritual and temporal. And when thou hast guided each of us through this pilgrimage, O may we be conducted by thy rod and staff, through the dark valley, and admitted, through the merits of our risen Saviour, to all the blessedness of Emmanuel's land. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXX. 4—7.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS XVIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—3. When the Lord has goodness in store for a people, he will raise up and prepare his instruments in any circumstances, and bring them into power at the fittest seasons: and they who are taught of him will be as David, nor fail to do what is pleasing in his sight. Ver. 4—8. Nothing tends so much to corrupt and destroy a nation, as a neglect of true religion, or the prevalence of idolatry and wickedness. Wherever these evils prevail, a thorough and speedy reformation is urgently called for. In such reformation, every cause and occasion of sin must be exposed in its true character, and dealt with accordingly. And the ruler, or minister, who has authority to act in such matters, putting his trust in God, and acting clearly, openly, and decidedly, according to his revealed will, needs feel no opposition, but shall surely prosper. Ver. 9—11. But corrupt nations and churches that obey

God, that make void his law by their customs, and refuse to amend, will, sooner or later, be destroyed. Ver. 13—16. Even the true worshippers of God, whom he accepts in mercy, are often sorely oppressed by the wicked; their faith is found weak, and perhaps their courage fails them in trial; improper concessions are therefore made; most objectionable means are had recourse to for relief: and when this is done, so far from gaining safety, or any long exemption from sorrow, it only encourages the enemy to repeat his assaults, and worse trials may be expected. This is particularly the case when aught is taken, or withheld, from the service of God to conciliate the ungodly. Ver. 17—35. Wherefore great are the trials in which even good people are, at times, involved. God, in his righteousness, permits the wicked to seek their ruin—to reproach their faith—to use the utmost subtilty and skill for their annoyance—to address the most false, unreasonable, and even blasphemous representations to the passions of the multitude; and zealously to employ every means, the most likely for their destruction. Ver. 36, 37. But true believers, thus pressed to an extreme, and grieved for the dishonour done to the Lord their God, accepting now the chastisement of their sins at his hand, and being guided by true wisdom and discretion, will not attempt to grapple with the adversary on his own chosen ground; but, looking up to the Most High, will cleave to the path of duty, and wait for the end of the Lord, knowing that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

We may, at all times, safely trust in God. Our first desire should ever be to serve him truly, in the right use of those means which he has himself appointed. We should, therefore, guard against all idolatry and will-worship, more especially against a carnal and superstitious abuse of things otherwise good or indifferent; and be always ready, with our prayers, our influence, and most hearty co-operation, to aid the efforts of those who faithfully contend for purity of worship, and for truth and righteousness in all things. And, knowing well how weak we are, and what slavery and wretchedness would result from error and unbelief, we should carefully watch, and shut our ears against, the crafty insinuations and arguments of those emissaries of satan, who would shake our confidence in God, and in the things we have received according to the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us even hold our peace in the presence of men who would draw us into strife and debate; and if our minds are uneasy and perplexed, and we know not what to think, let us rather have recourse to those who have the rule over us, who have spoken to us the word of God, and whose faith it is our privilege to follow.

PRAYER.

Holy and merciful God! who rulest supreme in the heavens, and doest according to thine own will amongst the children of men, thou art infinitely great and good, and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Whom have we in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that we

desire besides thee. Thou hast the words of eternal life. We worship and adore thee as the only Lord God. We bless thee for the greatness of thy condescension and love, in raising up for us an horn of salvation in the house of thy servant David; in giving us, poor, sinful, and unworthy creatures, access to thyself through Jesus Christ; and in showing us, so clearly, the true way, that we may walk in it, and find acceptance and favour. O grant us, we beseech thee, thy Spirit: and in purity and holiness, and with increasing zeal, may we constantly persevere in thy service. Bless the nation and the church to which we belong. Cleanse them thoroughly from all idolatry, superstition, and wickedness. Let no enemy, and no unrighteousness, prevail over them to their ruin: neither let thy wrath be kindled against them for any secret offences. And may the rulers of thy people be just, and holy, and ever zealous for the truth as it is in Jesus; and let them enjoy much of thy favour and blessing in the faithful discharge of their important duties. We humble ourselves before thee, under a sense of our great unworthiness and guilt. Our very nature is corrupt. We are ever prone to that which is evil; we often abuse even the tokens and memorials of thy tenderest mercy; and are continually adding to the number of our offences. But, O God, do thou pardon the iniquity of our sin. Heal our backslidings; sanctify our hearts by thy special grace; and let no sin have dominion over us. Enable us, more and more clearly, to apprehend thy mercy in Christ Jesus; and the necessity of being conformed to thy will. Let us not expect to prosper, or be in peace, whilst we venture to transgress in any respect, and are not walking with thee in truth; and O do thou work in us both to will and to do thy good pleasure. Strengthen us also, O Lord, we beseech thee, to resist all our spiritual enemies. May no suggestions of satan; no crafty or malicious insinuations of ungodly men; and no inward workings of unbelief, have power to shake our confidence in thy word. Thou art our rock and our refuge; let us never be ashamed of our hope: but, with a firm and unwavering faith, and a growing ardour of love, may we stedfastly abide with thee, and be humble, and patient, and persevering in the performance of every duty, which, in the course of thy good providence, in our various relations of life, thou hast given us to do. We thank thee for all thy gracious goodness towards us, and for all thy kindness and care, in the exercise of which thou hast kept and brought us hitherto. In safety thou hast kept us during

the night. Surround us still with thy favour as with a shield. Be with us through the day. Bless our kindred and friends. Pardon all our offences. And hear us, O Lord, we beseech thee, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIII. 18.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XIV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—7. There are times when the word of God is preached with uncommon power, and multitudes of every sort are convinced, and become obedient to the faith. At such times, the enmity of unbelievers is usually much exasperated, and often breaks out into violent opposition. But this only awakens a greater zeal and boldness in the true servants of Christ; occasions a clearer manifestation of the truth and power of godliness, and serves to scatter the seeds of divine truth into divers places. Ver. 8—10. The Lord, who, in the beginning of the gospel, wrought signs and wonders by the hands of the apostles, in confirmation of the truth, is still present by his Spirit, to save those who, having faith to be healed, look stedfastly towards him. These, being healed and strengthened, are seen to walk, with cheerfulness and activity, in the way of his commandments. Ver. 9—18. Human nature, since the fall, is ever prone to idolatry. Hence men are always ready to bestow on the mere instruments, or means, which God employs, that honour which they will not give to himself. But the faithful servants of the Lord will never tolerate so gross an abuse, even though they themselves should be the objects of it. They will fearlessly proclaim its inexcusable folly and wickedness, and restrain it by all means in their power. Ver. 19, 20. Indeed the favour and applause of an unthinking multitude are things of no value. They will idolize and exalt a man beyond measure to-day; and yet subject him to the most cruel, unjust, and contemptuous treatment to-morrow. But happy and safe are they who trust in God, and are accepted of him; for his favour is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life. Ver. 21—28. Many, nevertheless, are the trials that afflict the just. Believers, therefore, need to be confirmed, edified, comforted, and preserved in the faith. For these ends, as well as for teaching and converting sinners, God has appointed pastors and teachers to be ordained in every church. These are upheld and blessed in their labours by the Holy Spirit, through faith and prayer. They are also subject to one another in the Lord: and gladly give an account of their stewardship, rehearsing all that God is pleased to do with them.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The saving efficacy of the word of God, whether read or preached, depends entirely upon himself; who gives, or withholds, the Holy Spirit, in perfect

righteousness, as seemeth good in his sight. We should earnestly pray for this special grace; without which both our conduct and our portion will assuredly be with unbelievers. How common, and yet how gross, is the sin of ascribing to others, or assuming to ourselves, the glory which is due to God alone! We should guard against this evil propensity. And let no man think it strange, if, living godly in Christ Jesus, he should suffer persecution. It is through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of God. But, trusting in the Lord our Saviour, and doing what he commands, we shall be carried safe through every trial. How thankful should we be for this assurance! and for the unspeakable help and comfort we derive from the standing ministry, and all the means of grace which God has provided for us in his house! We should also, with personal abasement and self-denial, pray for one another, and seek an interest in the prayers of the church; knowing that the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much. And let us openly and honestly acknowledge before men, all that God has done for us, or enabled us to do in his service.

PRAYER.

O thou great and glorious God! whose creatures we are, and in whom we live, and move, and have our being, we draw near unto thee, under a deep sense of our own personal unworthiness and guilt; and bless thee for the grace thou hast been pleased to bestow, and for all the benefits of this great salvation. Justly, O Lord, mightest thou have left us to perish. Instead of sending thine own Son to visit and redeem us—to enlighten our darkness, to remove our guilt, and be our leader and commander in the way everlasting, well mightest thou have left us to be filled with the fruits of our own doings, to live in fear and wretchedness on the earth, and at length to die without hope. We rejoice, and are filled with gratitude, when we think of thy great mercy; and most highly would we value and esteem thy word, and all the means of grace, which, by the toils and sufferings of thy faithful servants, thou hast, of old, established in these, as in other, lands. O do thou give us thy Spirit, and lead us in thy truth. Teach us to know thee, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent: manifest thou thyself unto us, as thou dost not unto the world. And, being delivered from spiritual darkness and unbelief, and from all idolatry and wickedness, may we truly and reverently fear thy name, and serve thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. O how corrupt is our nature! and how strong and bitter are the prejudices of the unbelieving heart against thee and thy ways! Men love darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. They hate and persecute th-

people, O Lord, and are utterly unwilling that thou shouldst reign over them. Save us, we beseech thee, from this great sin. Create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us. Let us not, in any circumstances, be carried away with the error of the wicked. Let us not be deterred by any fear of reproach or suffering, from openly acknowledging thee as our God, or from observing all thy statutes and ordinances to do them. May all the difficulties we experience be overruled for our good, and for the furtherance of the gospel, that thy glory may be promoted. And let us not be weary in well-doing; but be followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. We thank thee for all thy goodness, and especially for the suitable help which thou hast given us in the church. May the teachers and rulers, ordained according to thy word, be upheld, protected, and blessed by thy special favour. And whilst we enjoy, with gratitude, the means of grace, and the bounties of thy good providence, wherewith thou sustainest us from day to day, may the work of our preparation for death and for eternity be continually advancing. May the close of every day, as it finds us nearer unto death, find us also more ready and prepared to die. And do thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us. Hide thy face from our sins: blot out all our iniquities. Take us under thy special protection during the night; and let no evil come near our dwelling. Bless our relations and friends, and all that are dear to us in the flesh or in the spirit. When we sleep, may we peacefully repose under the shadow of thy wings; and when we awake, may we still be with thee. Hear these our humble prayers: hear us for the Lord Jesus' sake. And to thee, O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all glory, and praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLVIII. 10.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS XIX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—7. Nations and churches, as well as families and individuals, have their times of trouble and distress—times, when the church of God, and the ordinary means of its support, are in danger, and the very name of Jehovah is blasphemed and dishonoured, and the faith of his servants is laughed to scorn. The sure and only effectual remedy in such cases, is prayer to God: and when the princes, the rulers and people seek earnestly unto him, through the

great Prophet and Intercessor, for relief, he will not deny them their request, nor leave them in doubt as to the success of their supplications. Even though a crisis may have come, when there is no strength left to carry any defensive or remedial plan into effect, yet the Hearer of prayer will take the matter into his own hand, and comfort the hearts of his people with an assured hope of success. Ver. 8—28, 35. The enemy, indeed, within the bounds of his restraint, may still continue to practise and prosper; may repeat his hard and ungodly speeches, and write the most bitter things against the Lord and his Anointed; aye, and boasting of those fearful acts, which, in righteous judgment, the great God may have wrought by his instrumentality, he may gather his hosts together, and threaten with the utmost confidence to destroy. But the high and holy One has seen his iniquity; he knows the proud boastings of his heart. He has also seen the affliction of his people, and heard their prayer. He will therefore interpose in the time of need; and, being mindful of his promise, will consume the wicked with his blast, and cause him, at length, to perish from the way. Even whilst his servants are spreading out the case before him, and are earnestly beseeching him to do for his own name's sake, his arm will be stretched out, and the victory secure. Ver. 29—37. Wherefore they who are stout-hearted in the way of sin, and especially they who tread the path of oppressors, are sure, when the cup of their iniquity is full, to be broken and put to shame: whereas, in Zion and in Jerusalem, even at the last extremity, there is deliverance; for the remnant of God's people shall not be cut off; they shall still be fed and preserved on the earth, and be the seed of a glorious church, to serve him, in the time to come, according to his word.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Over and above the continual use of prayer to God, whereby we express our unceasing dependence upon him, and obtain his special blessing on all that concerns us from day to day, we should, in every particular emergency—in every case of trouble and distress, apply to him in deep humiliation, and trust in him above all, and even when the help of man is of no avail. Nor need we ever despair of the nation, or of the church, however great, and apparently irresistible, the danger, in any existing circumstances, may be, whilst those in power are disposed to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and, with the help of God's faithful ministers, do sincerely spread out the matter before him, and seek deliverance by fasting and prayer. The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But wo be to them that are proud, and who trust in themselves—who trust in vanity and speak lies—whose thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; whilst wasting and destruction are in their paths! The Lord, for his own name's sake, will, sooner or later, be the destruction of such. Let us seek to be sanctified by the blood of sprinkling, that the destroying angel may pass by us, when he comes forth from the Lord to destroy the wicked. And when we think of the angels that excel in strength, and are swift to do the will of God, let us

rejoice to know that they are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God! who art glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises, we humbly and thankfully approach thy throne. We worship and adore thee in Christ Jesus our Lord, for whose sake thou art kind and merciful unto us. Thy mercies, indeed, are new unto us every morning, and great is thy faithfulness. Salvation belongeth to thee, and thou only, O Lord, makest us to dwell in safety. In ourselves, we are ever weak and defenceless: both within and round about us, there are many causes of destruction to be feared; but thou surroundest us with thy favour as with a shield; and, owing to thy great mercies, we are not consumed. O what reason we have to bless thee for the care of thy good providence—for the ever-watchful care with which thou protectest us during the hours of darkness and of sleep; and for all the blessings, both temporal and spiritual, which thou givest to be the daily portion of our cup. May we ever remember and deeply feel the debt of obligation under which we are. May we also live to thy glory. And do thou make plain to us the path of duty; and work in us both to will and to do, according to thy good pleasure; that, in just and holy living, we may have great peace, and may obtain a growing evidence of our acceptance with thee. We are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, as all our fathers were. We are often grieved by the wickedness which is every where abroad. We feel deeply the reproaches which are cast on thy people. Our souls are wounded by the neglect and contempt of thy truth, which so greatly prevail, and by all the dishonour which is done to thy holy name. Arise, O Lord, we beseech thee, and plead the cause which is thine own. When the enemy cometh in like a flood, O lift thou the standard against him. Stay thou the floods of iniquity and ungodliness. Let ignorance, and error, and idolatry be put away. Let profaneness, and lewdness, intemperance and extravagance have an end. Let the proud boaster have no success against the godly: but may the righteous flourish, and Jerusalem be the joy and praise of the whole earth. We are thy servants, O Lord. Remember us, we beseech thee, with that love which thou bearest to thy people. May we be firmly established in the faith; rooted and grounded in love; and ever found amongst the number that worship thee in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in

the flesh. As a family, may we be more and more at one in every thing that pertains to life and godliness. May we dwell together in unity: may we study carefully to avoid every cause of offence; and, in the constant and affectionate discharge of all our relative duties, may we seek to promote each other's welfare, and be at peace among ourselves. And O do thou preserve us in thy fear all the day long. In all the business and intercourse of life, may we do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thee. Let nothing tempt us to forsake the way of integrity and truth: and do thou grant us that measure of prosperity which thou seest meet to bestow. But above all things, may our souls prosper, and be in health. Bless our friends and relations, and the whole household of faith. Be merciful to our unrighteousness: blot out all our transgressions; and hear us graciously, O thou hearer of prayer, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CVI. 1—5.

SCRIPTURE—Acts xv.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 5, 10. Fatal heresies, arising from human ignorance and depravity, are ever ready to corrupt the truth, to destroy the peace and purity of the church, and to mislead unstable souls from the only way in which salvation and happiness are to be found. Of this kind are all things imposed by human authority, or otherwise adopted, as necessary to be observed in order to gain acceptance with God; thus marring the simplicity of faith in Christ, and proving a yoke of bondage incompatible with the promise of salvation by grace through faith. Ver. 2, 7. It is, at all times, the duty of ministers and elders, and all true disciples of Christ, to oppose, by the pure light of the glorious gospel, all errors and heresies whatsoever; and, in every place, to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Ver. 2, 6—31. But, when serious difficulties arise—when great differences of opinion respecting matters of faith, worship, discipline, or government, are likely to engender strife and division,—in short, where any root of bitterness has sprung up, which the teachers and rulers of a particular church are unable, by their own efforts, to correct, it is good to refer the matter to a more general council, or synod, by which, with greater confidence and impartiality, the case may be decided. And when the members of such councils do sincerely and humbly deliberate in the fear of God, in the pure light of his revealed will, and under the influence of his Holy Spirit, their decisions will have great weight, and the happiest effects will be produced. Ver. 3, 4, 32—41. It is always a matter of joy to sincere Christians, to hear of the extensio

and prosperity of Messiah's kingdom. For this, as well as for the comfort and edification of believers, will the faithful ministers of Christ, with holy intrepidity and zeal, continually labour, wherever an opening can be found: and the very disputes and differences which, through weakness and corruption, may, at times, arise among them in so good a work, though sinful in themselves, and much to be regretted, God will overrule and turn to his own glory in the end.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How thankful should we be for the pure light of the gospel, whereby we are taught to believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved! Let us seek to know the power of this saving truth; abstaining from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and abounding more and more in the fruits of righteousness, to the praise of the glory of the grace of God. For this cause, let us guard against all unscriptural views and observances, and all such legal and superstitious abuses of forms and ordinances in the hands of men, as are inconsistent with the gospel method of justification by faith alone; that, having escaped from the yoke of bondage, and from all confidence in the flesh, we may truly abide in the love of God, and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. Let us also encourage and support those faithful servants of God, who are zealous for the truth as it is in Jesus, and who, in the spirit of self-denial, boldly defend and maintain it against all error. When they meet together in council, let us pray that no strife, or vain glory, may vex their deliberations, but that, in meekness, they may be guided in judgment, and led, in the truth and by the Spirit of God, to such decisions as will greatly promote the peace, the edification and comfort of the church. And whilst we rejoice in the success of their labours, let us not stumble at the faults they may commit, but pray that, notwithstanding all their infirmities, the gospel may have free course and be glorified.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most merciful God! we come before thee this evening to give thanks for the abundant riches of thy grace, in the exercise of which thou hast abounded toward us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Blessed be thy holy name, that, whilst so many others are yet in darkness and error, labouring under the yoke of bondage, and going about to establish a righteousness of their own, thou hast given us the glad tidings of a free salvation. O enable us to see clearly, and firmly to embrace, the truth as it is in Jesus. Instructed by thy word, may we look away from every thing else, unto him who perfectly obeyed the law in our stead, and by whose righteousness alone we are justified. Accept us into favour, O Lord, we beseech thee, for his sake. Grant that by grace through faith we may indeed be saved—saved from the love and practice, as well as from the punishment, of

sin. May the grace that bringeth salvation teach us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. And O may it be our great and unspeakable happiness to be received into glory hereafter. Have mercy on those that are yet in darkness, and know not the truth. May the gospel of the blessed God, and the means of grace, be speedily brought within their reach. May their hearts also be inclined to obey. And let the true church in all the earth be enlightened and cleansed yet more and more; protected from the inroads of error, from all superstition, and from every yoke of bondage, which men of ignorant and corrupt minds would impose upon it. Bless that portion of the church to which we belong. Be thou as a wall of fire round about, and the glory in the midst thereof. Let salvation be for walls and bulwarks: and may those whom thou hast appointed to teach and rule, be fitted with thy Holy Spirit. Guide them by thy wisdom, and help them in thy grace: and when they come together to consult and decide in matters that deeply concern the souls of men, let no disturbance arise from the world, the devil, or the flesh; but, in meekness of wisdom, and by the unction of the holy One, may they be led into all truth, and armed with power to prevail. Bless the sovereign, and all who have just authority over us. May we, as one of the families of thy people, have our sure portion in Israel, and rejoice for the consolation and grace which are brought to us by the gospel. Thou art our God and Saviour, under whose care it is our blessed privilege to abide. By thy good providence, thou hast kept us in being, and helped us thus far in our journey through life. Into thy hands would we still commit the keeping of our souls, and bodies, and all that we have. Watch over us, O thou that slumberest not, nor sleepest! and let the blessing of thy Holy Spirit keep our hearts and minds. Be kind and merciful to those whom we bear on our hearts before thee. Visit the sick and the afflicted. Prepare the dying for death; and us for all the trials through which we have to pass. In mercy, hear us in these our humble supplications; and when thou hearest, forgive and accept; for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 33—37.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS XX.

REMARKS.

Hezekiah's sickness, recovery, and death.—Man is born to trouble. The good king Hezekiah is seized with a distemper which threatens a fatal termination. The prophet directs him to settle his temporal affairs, with a view to prepare for death. The warning is addressed to us 'in all time of our tribulation,' and even 'in all time of our health.'

'Is any among you afflicted, let him pray.' Hezekiah says, 'O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.' He does not mean that he was free from sin. By 'perfect' we are to understand, upright and sincere. Nor does he trust in his good life. Some have said that it is only such a life which can support us on a bed of death. But a good life while a ground of comfort, is no ground of confidence. If 'our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience,' our confidence is, 'I know in whom I have believed!' But Hezekiah weeps! nay, 'with a great weeping.' And why? 'Nothing,' says Scott, 'appears to have distressed him . . . with regard to the state of his own soul.' He desired to live; yet not for his own sake, but only 'for the interests of true religion.' And we may pray, in submission, for health. 'In everything . . . make known your requests unto God.'

Hezekiah is restored in answer to his prayers. He obtains a respite of fifteen years. Even if restored, we should seek to be 'always ready,' because unlike him, 'we know not the day or the hour' of our death. Jehovah is pleased to work by means. He could have restored him without any. But the prophet takes a 'lump of figs,' and that though he knew the king was to recover. 'Ask, and ye shall receive.' Hezekiah asks a sign, only to confirm his faith. It is given. Isaiah says, 'the sun went back;' but it was probably, as the historian says, only the shadow. The rays of the sun would appear to have been refracted in an extraordinary manner. Alas! the best are imperfect. Behold Hezekiah's fall. 'In the business of the ambassadors,' (as we read 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.) 'God left him, to try him.' For the pride and vanity he discovered, he is doomed to hear the astounding prediction of the Babylonish captivity. What a trial to the patriot king! Pious as patriotic, he submits to his sentence, while he feels for Judah! He repents, yet suffers irretrievably. Spared for the sake of his people, he is, for his folly, obliged to be thankful that 'peace and truth should be in his days.' What 'painful sensations' must the prospect of the future 'have occasioned him!'

Let us learn to improve affliction, and walk humbly with our God. Even Hezekiah died at last. His fifteen years' respite expires without renewal. We know not what a day may bring forth. Let us live as if every day were our last; let us not put off the work of life—the concerns of eternity, till a dying

hour; but even in health and strength prepare for sickness and death. Let us take in time the warning, 'Thou shalt die;' and when, like Hezekiah, we go down to the grave, we shall sleep in Jesus, and our epitaph will be, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!'

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the holy One who inhabiteth eternity. We are of yesterday. Our foundation is in the dust. We are insignificant and mortal as creatures; we are ill-deserving, hell-deserving as sinners. Nay, blessed God, we confess that death is the wages of sin. It is as sinners we are mortal. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. We know that thou wilt bring us to death. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end! In all time of our affliction, in all time of our health, may we hear thee saying to us, as thou saidst to Hezekiah, Set thine house in order for thou must die, and not live! Even now in the time of health and strength may we prepare for sickness and death. O spare us, that we may receive strength before we go hence and be no more. Preserve our lives, if it be thy blessed will; but especially save our souls. Sinful and mortal in ourselves, may we be united to Christ for life and salvation. Of thee may we be in Christ Jesus, as made of thee unto one and all of us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Preserved by thy goodness, may our lives by grace be directed to thy glory. O thou who didst try Hezekiah, to know all that was in his heart, suffer us not to fall into temptation. Leave us not to ourselves. Take not thy Holy Spirit from us. Keep us from being tempted, and support and deliver us when we are. Teach us, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and we shall keep it unto the end. Give us understanding, and we shall keep thy law; yea, we shall observe it with our whole heart. Make us to join the path of thy commandments; therein may we delight. Incline our heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken us in thy way. May there be peace and truth in our days. In the days of our sovereign, in these the days of our Saviour, may there be abundance of peace. May all become Christians, and may all Christians speak the truth in love, and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Bless the afflicted; the dying; all near and dear to us; all whom we ought to remember before thee;

all who need thy mercy. We thank thee for refreshing sleep. O when we awake from the sleep of death, may we rise to the life immortal, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Saviour. Our Father which art, &c.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXX. 129—133.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XVI. 1—25.

REMARKS.

Paul (with Silas) is now in Lycaonia (in Asia Minor); his route will be traced by reference to the map. At either Derbe or Lystra—neighbouring towns—he falls in with Timothy, his young son in the faith. If, (ver. 3.) he agreed in his case to do what he had refused in that of Titus, he is chargeable with no inconsistency, clearly acting on the scriptural principle, that we ought alike to make concessions in matters of indifference, and maintain with uncompromising strictness the essentials of religion. Ver. 9. Why did the Spirit debar them from proconsular Asia and from Bithynia? Behold the reason here. He had work for them elsewhere; blessed be God, in our quarter of the globe, if not in this distant island of the Gentiles itself. We have here the introduction of the gospel into Europe. Luke now introduces himself: ‘we endeavoured to go into Macedonia.’ And now they have safely landed at (the Roman colony of) Philippi. How wonderful the way of providence! Here, led by the Spirit who had brought them hither, they went on the sabbath out of the city by the river—Strymon—a small stream which runs by Philippi. Here (as was usual in such places) ‘was a proseucha,’ a house of prayer; for so the expression (ver. 13.) may read. (Note. The Jews had frequently synagogues or proseuchas in the provinces, the latter generally on the banks of rivers.) Here they sat down, it being the custom of Jewish doctors to sit, their disciples standing; as we read of our Saviour on the mount. They then ‘spoke unto the women,’ the sexes having probably different hours of assembling, as the place was likely too small for both. Behold now the happy result and divine object of their visit—the conversion of Lydia! This female, chosen by grace, was a worshipper of God; no Christian indeed, yet no idolator. ‘She heard’—*us* being supplied. Luke’s humility, even though he had spoken, would not have allowed him to mention the fact. And not in vain. ‘The Lord opened her heart.’ Whitby says, ‘to open the ear is to make willing.’ Psal. xl. 6. By pride, prejudice, and passion, our minds are as if hermetically sealed against the gospel of Christ. Our understandings must be opened to his light, our wills to his law, our hearts to his love. In all these ways was Lydia influenced, though yet her heart and affections were chiefly engaged. As ‘she heard’ the external call of the gospel, she was ‘called effec-

tually’ by the ‘Lord the Spirit.’ ‘Convinced of sin and misery, enlightened in the knowledge of the Saviour, renewed in will, she was persuaded and enabled to put her faith and trust in Jesus.’ Devout and amiable, she was a stranger to true religion, till the Lord was pleased to open her heart. Our hearts are naturally closed against the gospel. We neither know nor love it. Nay, we are averse to God and goodness; we love the darkness. Hence it is, that ‘except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Our darkened understandings must be enlightened, our perverted wills must be renewed, our corrupted hearts and affections must be sanctified. Now it is God alone who can effect the change. Behold the effect. Lydia had ‘heard’ before; now she ‘attends to’ the word; to outward attendance, adding spiritual ‘attention;’ some say, applying it to herself, or rather, applying herself to it, with prayer, humility, faith, and love. Accordingly she was baptized, and her household; as adult converts, being believers, and the children of believing parents, are alike to be baptized. As still farther evidence of conversion, she constrained the apostles to accept her hospitality. The sequel is less pleasing, and is an affecting contrast to the history of Lydia; yet shows the power of God, in enabling his servants to cast out the evil spirit out of the damsel that was possessed, though it provoked the hostility of her masters, and excited against them a violent persecution.

Improvement.—I. The case of Lydia teaches us the use of means. 1. They are most important. Ask, and ye shall receive. The man at Bethesda was cured after thirty-eight years. Lydia heard, ‘and the Lord opened her heart.’ 2. Still they are but means. It is only sovereign grace which can make them effectual. The work of Lydia’s conversion was that of God alone. II. Again, the history of the apostle’s persecution shows that he that is after the flesh persecuteth him that is after the Spirit; and this may prove it is only through much tribulation we can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father! we bless thee for the privilege of prayer. And in its exercise may we obtain the blessing. May the means of grace inspire us with the hope of glory. We bless thee for the resistless yet persuasive efficacy of thy Holy Spirit. O thou who wast pleased to open the heart of Lydia, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul, be pleased, we beseech thee, to open our eyes to see the wonders of thy law. May we receive thy Holy Spirit, to know the things that are freely given to us of thee. May the Spirit take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us. As we are called externally in the gospel, may we obtain the effectual calling of thy Holy Spirit. Convince us, we pray thee, of our sin and misery, enlighten our minds in the knowledge of Christ, renew our wills, persuade

and enable us to receive Jesus Christ, as he is freely offered to us in the gospel. Worshipping thee in spirit and in truth, and receiving thy word of truth, with prayer, and faith, and love, converted unto thee, may we be edified in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation. As we have all been baptized with water, may we be born of the Spirit. May we be faithful to the Lord. May we put all our faith and trust in Jesus. May we trust in him for both pardon and purity. We bless thee for showing us the way of salvation. Look thou upon us and be merciful unto us, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name. Order our steps in thy word; and let not any iniquity have dominion over us. May we rely on Jesus, as our prophet, priest, and king, for wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification. Whilst we look to him for mercy to pardon, may we look on high too for might to subdue our sin, and strive in a better strength than our own, even the imparted aid of an almighty arm, to wage with it a constant warfare, till victory declare for grace in the glory of heaven. Deliver us from the evil one. Put thy fear in our hearts, that we may not depart from thee. May we have the Spirit of Christ, and thus being the sons of God, and the brethren of Christ, if we are destined to pass through tribulation, may we be admitted to serve thee day and night in thy temple. We thank thee for thy kindness this day. Keep us from harm during the night. If we are raised to the light of another day, may we be fitted and prepared to serve thee. May all our powers unite in thy glory. May we acknowledge thee in all our ways, and do thou direct our paths. Bless us and all men, more than we can ask, for the Redeemer's sake. Our Father, &c.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXIX. 57—60.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS XXI.

REMARKS.

Reign of Manasseh.—First, *His character.*—Beginning at the early age of twelve, he reigned fifty-five years, the longest reign of the kings of Judah. His was a wicked reign. He was the wicked son of a pious father. Too early placed on the throne, and deprived of his father, he is guilty of idolatry, witchcraft, and even murder. Ver. 3. 'He made a grove,' (comp. ver. 7.) or Ashtaroth, (Astarte) even a 'graven image' of that idol, and that in the house of God! And while he 'seduced Israel,' and used

enchantments, he 'shed innocent blood very much,' as Isaiah is thought to have been sawn asunder by him.

Secondly, *His fate.*—Sin always brings ruin in its train. The wickedness of Manasseh (added to all the wickedness of Judah, as the last drop which made the cup of their iniquity overflow), brought on the Babylonish captivity. Ver. 17. 'The rest of his acts, his sin that he sinned;' ay, and blessed be God, his repentance that he repented, that is 'written' too, (see 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12.) 'Bound with fetters and carried to Babylon,' like the prodigal, 'when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him, and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.' And he brought forth fruits meet for repentance, taking away the strange gods, &c.

Reign of Amon.—Short and inglorious. He began at twenty-two, and reigned but two years! He walked in the steps of his father. No! there was one way in which he did not follow him; as we read in Chronicles. Unlike his father, 'he humbled not himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had done before him.' For the rest of his acts, alas, there is no repentance; this Amon multiplied trespass, as none is wicked at once. Perhaps he had intended to repent, but 'dies the same.'

His end was tragical. His servants, who should have been his protectors, were his murderers. His house, which should have been his castle of safety, was his place of execution. He had profaned the house of God with his idols, and now his own is polluted with his blood. The wicked Amon is driven away in his wickedness, in the providence of God, which brings good out of evil, to make room for good Josiah, under whom Judah was to enjoy a momentary gleam of expiring prosperity.

Improvement.—As Hezekiah was the good son of a wicked father, he was the good father of a wicked son. Still there is a direct connection between personal and family religion. 'Thou shalt be saved and thy house.' 'The promise is to you, and to your children.' 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' What an encouragement to 'suffer little children, and not forbid them to come unto Jesus!' True, as our children may be good though we are wicked, they may be wicked though we are good; but these are the exceptions, which confirm the rule. The faith and prayer of Hezekiah were at last instrumental to his son's conversion; and if Manasseh was wicked at first, it was because so early deprived of his parent's example and instructions. How important then in life to sow the seed which may afterwards spring up, and at death to leave the young to those who will bring them to Jesus.

Duty of repentance.—The cases of Manasseh and Amon prove the necessity and efficacy of the duty. Both are sinners, as we are all, without exception. But Manasseh repents and is saved. Amon sins on and perishes! There is the ray of hope; here is the beacon of danger. With Mary Magda-

lene, and the thief on the cross, Manasseh is saved. While Amon, and all the impenitent, are lost. As none should despair, so none must presume. All mercy to the chief of sinners, no mercy to the least of sins. Let the penitent rejoice, for 'there is forgiveness with God.' Let the impenitent tremble, for 'except we repent, we shall all likewise perish.'

PRAYER.

Gracious God! we desire this morning, in our family circle, to worship thee, our Father and our Friend, and to give thee thanks for thy mercy to us during the past night. Thou art the one living and true God. Blessed be thy name for allowing us to meet at the family altar, to supplicate and obtain thy blessing. We bless thee for entering into covenant with Abraham, and saying, I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. Whilst we bless thee for Jesus Christ, and pray that in him all the nations of the earth may be blessed, and whilst we beseech thee to grant us individually an interest in the Redeemer, we humbly entreat that thou wouldst bless us as a family. O may there be no wicked Manasseh, no impenitent Amon, amongst us, or those with whom we are connected. May there be no wicked parents of good children, no wicked children of righteous parents. May the root and branches alike be holy. And to this end may we all be in Christ, as living branches of the true and living vine. May the promise be to us and to our children. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, may we be saved, with our house. O satisfy us truly with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. Even though not idolators, we are sinners, like Manasseh. But we bless thee that he repented. O may we repent with him. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us. Enable us to say with thy servant of old, Thou art our portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words. I entreated thy favour with my whole heart; be merciful unto me, according to thy word. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments. For the sake of Him who died that we might live, forgive us all our iniquity, especially the sins we may this day have committed in thought and in deed. We would humble ourselves before thee. O when we pray, do thou be entreated of us and bear our supplication. Save us, we beseech thee. May we know that the Lord he is God. O grant us repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Sorrowing for sin, may we yet trust in the Saviour. Esteeming it as a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into

the world to save sinners, of whom we are chief, may we bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Forbid that, like Amon, we should continue impenitent, to perish in our sins. May we be washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Being made free from sin, and become servants of God, may we have our fruit unto holiness, and our end everlasting life. Bless all whom we ought to remember before thee; all who have none to help them; all the ends of the earth. Take us under the shelter of thy wings this day. Preserve us from all the evils that are in the world. May we walk in thy fear, and enjoy thy favour in the Beloved. Hear us for his blessed sake. Our Father, &c.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 169—176.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XVI. 25—40.

REMARKS.

And now the apostles might naturally be expected to give way to feelings of despondency, if not vexation and revenge; but O! the power of grace. Their midnight occupation was prayer and praise. Praying, they praised God. 'Prayer all their business, all their pleasure praise!' It was said by a heathen writer of the early Christians, they sung a hymn, or praise, to Christ as God. Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? (and they gloried even in their tribulation) let him sing psalms. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving. Praise and prayer are alike constituent parts of devotion. Even when the importance of prayer is admitted, as none will deny it but in practice, the equal importance of praise is sometimes overlooked. Paul and Silas sung in the midnight gloom of a dungeon. Nor did they sing faintly: 'the prisoners heard them.' Ay, and God heard them; he sent an answer of peace. Yet, it was not the still small voice. He who speaks in the whirlwind, sent a great earthquake; his voice, his answer to their prayer. Roused from his sleep, and supposing his prisoners to have escaped, the jailor was about to attempt self-destruction. The apostle discovers his fatal intention, either from his exclamations, or from a divine monition. The kind address of his prisoners, still his prisoners, in connection with the obvious interposition of Jehovah, overwhelms him with mingled feelings of anxiety, of hope and despair; and evidently relenting, he brings them out, comes trembling, and asks respectfully, yet earnestly, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' Observe his question. Mark the feelings it expresses. It is the language of terror. He came trembling. He is afraid of instantly sinking into hell. It is the language of anxiety. He feels the importance of salvation. He prefers the soul to the body, eternity

to time, heaven to hell, and Christ to Belial. It is the language of conviction. He feels he is a sinner; a violator of God's holy law, that transcript of his moral perfections. He feels that he has not only endangered himself, but especially offended God, that he has incurred his wrath and curse, and can do nothing to avert them, much less to regain his favour. But it is the language, lastly, of hope. Though he does all, yet he does not altogether despair. While he feels most imminent danger, he yet conceives some faint, at least, some distant hope of safety; he hopes he may be saved—'what must I do to be saved?' Observe the import of the question. He wants salvation, not the world, but heaven, deliverance from sin, and that in respect of both its guilt and power together. 'What shall I do?' he says; religion is a personal concern. He feels with the prodigal, 'I have sinned;' with the publican, 'me, me a sinner?' Do; what can we do? Did the jailor think, with the young ruler, that he could 'do some good thing?' No, he felt his need of salvation, his need of a Saviour, and he resigned himself to him, he submitted to the gospel; 'what must I do?' He was willing to do any thing. O brethren, have we proposed this question to ourselves? If so, have we proposed it in spirit and in truth? We must propose it in a spirit of sincerity. Even the ruler went as far as that. Sincerity is the first step to religion. Unless we are in earnest, we know nothing of the matter. But sincerity is not enough. We must propose the question in a spirit of conviction. We must come as sinners to the only Saviour. Such is the question. The answer follows: 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.' 'Believe, and be saved!'

But, 'thou shalt be saved and thy house.' Not that the faith of the jailor, strictly to speak, directly involved the salvation of his family. But indirectly, at least it did; as it introduced them to the means of grace, and thus the hope of glory. But may we not warrantably conclude, that there is even a direct and immediate connection between the faith of a parent, and the salvation of his children? 'I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee!' 'The promise is to you, and to your children.'

PRAYER.

O Lord our God! we would desire, at the end of another day and week, to approach thy throne. Grant us the spirit of Paul and Silas. And O when we think of the power of religion to support in every situation, forbid that when they were content to sing in a dungeon, we should ever be reluctant to praise thee in our family. But lo! O Lord, another voice than theirs. That voice is thine. Thou speakest in the earthquake, as in the whirlwind. Thy voice divides the flames of fire. Thy voice is full of majesty. O we would think of the methods of thy grace, converting, now in the earthquake, now with the still small voice. However it may be, O Lord, may we be converted. To this end, O Lord, may we be convinced of our sin. May we be in earnest re-

garding the salvation of our souls. And may we see that we cannot save ourselves. O whilst we say, in anxious and earnest desire for salvation, yet not in the self-justifying spirit of the ruler. What good thing must we do, to have eternal life? may we say, in all the conviction of guilt and impotence, if not with all the alarm of the jailor. What must we do to be saved? We have sinned, and committed iniquity, and done wickedly, and rebelled. O give us a heartfelt sense of sin, in both its guilt and power. Feeling that we are great sinners, may we know and rejoice that Christ is a great and mighty Saviour. May we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may be saved. With repentance toward thee, may we have faith towards Jesus. May we put all our trust and confidence in him for salvation. Trusting in Christ, yet seeking to be holy, may we say in faith, We have longed for thy salvation, and thy law is our delight. Let our souls live, and they will praise thee; and let thy judgments help us. We have gone astray like lost sheep; seek thy servants, that we may never forget thy commandments. Grant us an interest in that twofold redemption from condemnation and corruption which he purchased by his blood, and lives to perfect by his Spirit, and dispose us ever, by thy heavenly grace, to the assiduous pursuit of that holiness which they are equally intended to produce. And, O Lord, with the jailor, may we obtain thy blessing as a family. Believing on Jesus, may thy servant be saved with his house. As we have all been baptized, O may we be born again; the children of God—a family in heaven. Enable us to rejoice, believing in God, and believing in Christ. Bless our country, our sovereign, and the church; the young, the aged, the afflicted, and the dying; our friends, our enemies, and all the ends of the earth. Watch over us this night. May we fear the grave no more than our bed. Raise us in the morning, if it be thy blessed will, and with the light of thy day may the light of thy countenance shine on us. Conduct us by thy counsel while we live. Receive us to thy glory when we die, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ. Our Father, &c.

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK.**SABBATH MORNING.**

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXVIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXXIX.

REMARKS.

Jeremiah has been supposed to have written this song of Zion, as the sixth and seventh verses correspond with Jer. x. 25. 'Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob and devoured him, and consumed him and made his habitation desolate.' But whoever was the author of this psalm, it appears to have been composed after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. The inheritance of Jacob was then invaded by the army of the Chaldees. The holy temple was polluted by the presence of ungodly men, who plundered it, and reduced it to ashes. The city of God was laid waste. Many of its inhabitants were mercilessly slain. And, with the exception of a small remnant, they whose lives were spared, were conducted as captives to Babylon, where they had 'threats of cruel mockings,' 2 Kings xxv. 2 Chron. xxxvi. During the long period of their captivity, when they sat down by the rivers of Babylon, and wept when they remembered Zion, these Jewish exiles, no doubt, often prayed that the anger of the Lord might be withdrawn from them, and that he would bring them back to the land of their 'fathers' sepulchres.' Affliction has often a salutary effect on the hearts and consciences of those who have forsaken God in the days of their prosperity. It subdues pride. It gives rise to serious thoughts. It brings the commission of sin to remembrance, and through the grace of God, leads to unfeigned repentance. In their low and degraded state therefore, the people of God are represented in this psalm as praying, not only that they might be delivered from the oppression of their enemies, but that they might experience the blessedness of those whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is covered. It is well when they whom God corrects are thus led to consider their ways. 'Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted.' Nor was their sad case forgotten by the psalmist, who, like Zedekiah, were 'bound in affliction and iron.' But are we not commanded to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and to pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us? How then does the psalmist pray that God would pour out his 'wrath upon the heathen,' and render 'seven-fold unto their bosom their reproach?' These supplications are evidently prompted by his zeal for the divine glory. They are not the unhallowed ebullitions of a vindictive spirit. The desire of the psalmist is that by the punishment of the enemies of his nation, God may 'be known among the heathen,' and that they may be visited with the 'reproach wherewith they have reproached' him. It is to be observed too, that he does not pray for their spiritual destruction. He does no more, therefore, than pious

Christians do when engaged in the prosecution of a war which they consider to be unavoidable or lawful. They consider it to be their duty to pray, that the designs of the enemies of their country may be defeated, and that the Lord of hosts may fight for them in the day of battle. As he spake by inspiration, it is in truth not the words of man, but of the Spirit of God. At the close of the psalm, anticipating that God will be gracious and merciful, the psalmist expresses his own pious resolution, and that of his countrymen, to offer to God continually the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. But who is there that has not cause to praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works done to the children of men? In these latter days, he has sent his Son into the world, to deliver us from the bondage of satan, and to save us from spiritual death. Let us, therefore, bless the Lord at all times. Let his praise be continually in our mouths. Let us present ourselves before him as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to him, which is our reasonable service.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we humble ourselves before thee, as the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. Thou dost according to thy pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. Thou woundest and thou healest. Thou castest down and thou raisest up. Thou killest and thou makest alive. Have mercy upon us, O God, for thy mercies' sake, for we are brought very low. Return, O Lord, and let it repent thee concerning thy servants, and restore to us the joy of thy salvation. In wrath remember mercy. Thou didst make man but a little lower than the angels, and didst crown him with glory and with honour. But our glory has departed. Our sins have provoked thy displeasure. We have been justly driven from thy presence, and have been led captive by the god of this world, and by our own evil desires and inclinations. Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned. Heal us, and we shall be healed. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name, and deliver us and purge away our sins for thy name's sake. We thank thee for this day of rest unto the body. May it be a day of rest unto our souls. May we be filled with that peace which the world cannot give nor take away. Though we are in the body, may our conversation be with thee in heaven. We rejoice to know that he who was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification, now sitteth at thy right hand making intercession for us. Confirm our faith in him, O God, and grant that our faith may work by love; purify our hearts, and enable us to overcome the world. Deliver us, we beseech thee, from that fear of death, through which many are, all their life-

time, subject to bondage. And when we shall have finished our course, grant that we may enter into that rest which remaineth for the people of God. Do thou prepare the hearts of thy worshippers everywhere for the service of thy house. O send forth thy light and thy truth, let them lead them and bring them into thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacle. Let their praises come up before thee as incense, and let the lifting up of their hands be as the morning sacrifice. And vouchsafe to give the tongue of the learned to them to whom thou hast committed the word of reconciliation, that they may know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary. Draw nigh, O God, to them who share not the joy of those who rejoice because it is said unto them, Let us go up unto the house of God. Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee: according to the greatness of thy power, preserve thou them that are appointed to die. May thy kingdom come. May thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Let these, the words of our mouth, O Lord, and the meditations of our heart, find acceptance with thee through Christ, our strength and Redeemer. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXX. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXXX.

REMARKS.

The symbolical forms which were placed over the mercy-seat or cover of the ark, in the holy of holies, were called the cherubim. God is therefore said to dwell 'between the cherubims,' because it was there that the miraculous light was seen which was emblematical of the divine presence. When the Israelites were marching through the wilderness, 'Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh,' were the three tribes that immediately followed the ark and the cherubim. It would seem to be on this account that God is intreated to 'shine forth before' them in particular, and to 'come and save' his people. God brought the seed of Israel out of Egypt, he planted them in the promised land. He built for them fenced cities. He watered them with the dew of heaven. Their nation increased. They spread over the neighbouring kingdoms. But when God 'looked that his vineyard should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes.' To punish his people for their idolatry, God allowed their adversaries to ravage their land, to which he had been a strong tower, and a wall of defence. The psalmist accordingly complains that the 'hedges' of the vineyard of the Lord of hosts had been 'broken down,' that 'the boar out of the wood' had wasted it, that 'the wild beast of the field' had devoured it, and that it had been 'burnt with fire.'

He also beseeches God to lift upon them again the light of his countenance, and vows that they will again return to folly. Whether this psalm was written or not, as some have imagined, after the invasion of the land of Judah by Sennacherib king of Assyria, and whether or not he is the person whom the psalmist describes as 'the boar out of the wood,' there can be no doubt of this at least, that the name is descriptive of Nebuchadnezzar. We may readily believe, therefore, that the Jews whom Nebuchadnezzar led away into captivity, must have considered the other parts of the psalm to be equally applicable to the desolate state of the country in these days, and to their own wretched condition. If again, as some suppose it was to an earthly king, that, in the first instance, the psalmist referred when he said, 'let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand upon the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself,' there are, nevertheless, few who will not discover in these words a reference, either typical or direct to 'Messiah, the Prince' of peace, who was once, and in a sense peculiar to himself, 'the Son of man,' and the Son of God. But like the Jewish church, the Christian church has, in various parts of the world, and during different periods of its history, been despoiled and trodden down. Some goodly branches have been cut off by the sword of the persecutor. The very form of Christianity has been rooted out from some parts of the earth, where formerly it flourished, and produced much fruit as 'a plant of renown.' We know not what may be the future condition of our own church, and our own country. The hand of the persecutor may again be red with the blood of the saints. Let us beware lest by our sins we should provoke God to say, 'And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it,' Isa. v. 5, 6. When God brought Christianity to this island, he 'cast out the heathen, and planted it.' It has since 'sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches' to the ends of the earth, and we have sat under our own vine, and under our own fig-tree, none making us afraid. Surely it becomes us to be grateful to him who is the Lord of the vineyard, for his goodness to us, and to bring forth fruit meet for repentance. 'Herein,' said Christ, 'is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit,' John xv. 8.

PRAYER.

Give ear, O God, to our humble prayer. Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, lift upon us the light of thy countenance. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hands of Moses and Aaron; our fathers trusted in thee. They cried unto thee and were delivered. They trusted in thee and were not confounded. Thou didst plant man a noble vine wholly a right seed, but he turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine. We are the corrupt offsprings

of a corrupt parent. We thank thee, O God, that thou hast not rooted us out as trees which cumber the ground. Thou hast spared us, that we might bring forth fruit meet for repentance. We thank thee for the privileges thou hast bestowed upon us. Thou hast caused those good tidings to be proclaimed in our hearing, which the Son of man came into the world to publish. We thank thee for our sabbaths, and for bringing us to thy holy mountain, and making us joyful in thy house of prayer. How unworthy have we proved ourselves to be of the least of thy mercies. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine upon us and we shall be saved. Enter not into judgment with thy servants, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified. O grant that we may experience the blessedness of those whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is covered. May we be washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Destroy in us every root of bitterness, and every seed of corruption, and produce in us all the fruits of the Spirit. Forgive, O God, what thou hast seen amiss in the performance of the duties of this holy day. In many things we all offend, and in all we come short of thy glory. Seal, we beseech thee, upon our hearts the instructions we have this day received, and grant that we may grow daily in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Watch over us during the week. Fit us for the discharge of the duties we may be called upon to perform, and prepare us for the trials which may be awaiting us. In thy great mercy, O God, deprive us not of any of our spiritual privileges. Enable us to value them and to improve them more than we have hitherto done. Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. And being made free from sin, may we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Protect, O God, the church which thou hast planted among us, from the assaults of its enemies. Do thou cause it to take deep root, and to fill the land, that we may sit under its shadow with great delight, and that its fruit may be pleasant to our taste. We pray that thou wouldst communicate to other nations the spiritual advantages we have so long enjoyed. May the time soon come, when ignorance, idolatry, and unbelief shall be rooted out from the earth, and when the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Bow down thine ear, O God, and hear and answer us for the sake of him whom thou

hearest always, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 9.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS XXII.

REMARKS.

In this chapter there is an account of the reign of one of the most excellent of the Jewish kings. Josiah ascended the throne at a very early age. But, notwithstanding his youth, and the wicked example which had been set before him by his father, he resisted the allurements of a court, and was proof against the temptations of sovereign power. The instructions of a pious mother are of inestimable value. Let a father neglect to train up a child in the way he should go; nevertheless, if a mother perform her duty, we may expect that, through the divine blessing, her judicious and affectionate labours will be attended with the happiest results. It is probable that Jedediah was such a mother, and that it was from her Josiah received his first serious impressions, and imbibed those good principles that guided his public and private conduct through life. The case of Josiah may show that, even while their offspring are yet in their childhood, parents may do much to form their characters and habits, and communicate to them that knowledge which makes wise unto salvation. 'Whom shall he teach knowledge,' asks the prophet Isaiah, (chap. xxviii. 9.) 'and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts.' Let parents therefore teach diligently their children, when they sit with them in their house, and walk with them by the way, and when they lie down, and when they rise up, Deut. vi. 7. The seed that is thus sown may lie dormant for a time, but being quickened by the Holy Spirit it may afterwards spring up, even when the sower has gone the way of all the earth, and bring forth fruit unto eternal life. It is not to be supposed that Josiah was unacquainted with the writings of Moses till the eighteenth year of his reign. The part he acted previous to this is inconsistent with such a supposition. 'The book of the law' which Hilkiah the high priest found in the temple, and which Shaphan the scribe showed to the king, was, there can be little doubt, that authentic copy of the law, which, by the command of God, Moses laid up in the most holy place, Deut. xxxi. 24. And the part of the book which Shaphan read in the presence of the king, appears to have been the twenty-ninth chapter of Deuteronomy, in which it is declared that calamities of various kinds would befall those who should not keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord. When the attention of Josiah was thus solemnly directed to the words of the book of the law, 'he was overwhelmed with fear and grief, being convinced that God might justly visit his apostate people with the judgments he had threatened.' 'By the law,

says the apostle, 'is the knowledge of sin,' Rom. iii. 20. 'The word of God,' he also says, 'is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,' Heb. iv. 12. The word of God points out to us the path of duty, and it makes known to us the consequences of disobedience. It also brings our sins before us. Let us therefore 'search the scriptures.' We may thus be led to humble ourselves, like Josiah, before God, and to present to him the sacrifice of broken and contrite hearts. And if we read, like Shaphan, the word of God to others, we may be the means of convincing them of their guilt and danger, and of leading them to inquire what they must do to be saved. 'Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?' Jer. xliii. 29.

PRAYER.

Almighty and everlasting Father, we come before thee this morning, to present to thee the tribute of thanksgiving and praise. It well becomes us, O Lord, to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night. Every day will we bless thee, and praise thy name for ever and ever. We bless thee, O Lord, for the place which thou hast assigned to us among the creatures thou hast made. Thou hast given to us more knowledge than the beasts of the earth, and made us wiser than the fowls of heaven. We bless thee for that book in which thou hast revealed to us thy will, and pointed out to us the way of salvation. We pray, O Lord, that our understandings may be opened, so that we may understand the scriptures. May they be profitable to us for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. May we be deeply humbled under the conviction that we are by nature the children of wrath, even as others. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou us from secret faults. We disclaim all confidence in our own wisdom, our own righteousness, and our own strength. Our sufficiency is in thee alone. Our hope is in our Saviour, in whom it pleased thee, the Father, all fullness should dwell. O grant that out of his fullness we may receive, and grace for grace. May we obtain redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, and being justified by faith, may we have peace with thee, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory that is yet to be revealed. And grant that the hope which maketh not ashamed may support us under the various trials of life, and constrain us to purify ourselves even as thou art pure. Enable us, O God, to walk in all thy ordinances and commandments

blameless. Guard us from the influence of evil communications. Though iniquity abounds, may our love not wax cold. Deliver us from the evil of our own hearts and from the devices of our spiritual enemies. Give unto us the wisdom which cometh from above, which is pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, without partiality and without hypocrisy, full of mercy and good fruits. Bless, O God, the labours of those faithful men who are employed in building up the walls of Zion. May thy house be a house of prayer for all people. Impress the minds of Christian parents with a sense of the solemn obligations thou hast laid upon them, to bring up their children in thy nurture and admonition. And teach the young to remember thee, their Creator, in the days of their youth, before the evil days come, or the years draw nigh when they shall say, We have no pleasure in them. We commend to thee, Father of mercies, all those who have eaten the bread of tears. Teach them to cast their care upon thee, and enable them to possess their souls in patience. Appoint unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness. Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, and establish thou the outgoings of the righteous. Hear, O God, in heaven thy dwelling-place, these our humble prayers, and send us an answer of peace, through Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XVII. 1—21.

REMARKS.

Before Christ came into the world, many of the sayings of the prophets respecting him were very imperfectly understood. The reference of others to him was not even known. Hence the Jews did not expect that the Messiah, promised to their fathers was to be treated by men as an outcast, and crucified as a malefactor. 'Christ crucified,' was to them 'a stumbling-block.' It was for this reason the uniform practice of the apostle Paul, as we are informed in this chapter, to reason with the Jews 'out of the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead. As the arguments of the apostle, however, did not always produce conviction on the minds of the prejudiced hearers, but called forth opposition and subjected him to persecution, ministers ought not to be discouraged, though, like him, they may often be unsuccessful, and have charges brought against them

of a false and malignant character. When Paul came to Berea, he found that the Jews there possessed much more candour, and a more earnest desire to know the truth, than their countrymen in Thessalonica. They were not disposed, however, to believe what was stated to them without inquiry. They examined the scriptures for themselves, and after comparing what Paul preached with that which they saw written in the word of God, 'many of them believed; also of honourable women, which were Greeks, and of men not a few.' We may be reminded by this, that we ought to call no man upon earth master, and that the doctrines preached by those who profess to be ministers of Christ, ought always to be subjected to the test of scripture. 'To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' Isa. viii. 20. 'I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say.' 1 Cor. x. 15. The conduct of the Jews in Berea may likewise show us that it is a duty to search the scriptures daily. When this is done, we are reminded daily of our sinfulness, and thereby kept humble; we are reminded of our constant exposure to temptation, and thereby rendered circumspect and watchful, while our faith and hope and love are cherished and strengthened. After Paul left Berea, he proceeded to Athens. This city was famed in those days for the eloquence of its orators, the skill and ingenuity of its artists, the valour of its generals, and the wisdom of its philosophers. It might have been supposed, therefore, that the minds of its inhabitants would have been less under the influence of degrading superstition than the minds of some of their less refined neighbours. But professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. Proud of their supposed intellectual superiority, some philosophers of the Epicurean and Stoic schools contemptuously styled Paul a 'babblers.' But they unquestionably might more appropriately have been called babblers, whose science was 'falsely so called,' and whose wisdom was 'foolishness with God.' Their own writers declare that the Athenians were the most superstitious people in all Greece, and that altars and statues of gods were to be seen there which were to be found no where else.

PRAYER.

Who, O Lord, is a God like unto thee? The heavens declare thy glory. The firmament sheweth forth thy handy-work. The things that are made reveal thine eternal power and Godhead. Nor hast thou ever left thyself without a witness of thy goodness, in that thou hast given to us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. We thank thee, O God, that when the foolish heart of man was darkened, and when the world by wisdom knew thee not, it pleased thee to send thy Son into the world, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. O God, grant that our darkened minds may be enlightened by him in whom are hid all the

treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Give unto us the humility of little children, that we may not lean to our own understanding, but receive with meekness the ingrafted word, that we may grow thereby. O Lord, we acknowledge in thy presence our manifold transgressions. Thou art our Father, and where has been thine honour? Thou art our Master, and where has been thy fear? Thou hast caused the Day-spring from on high to visit us, but our progress in knowledge and righteousness has not corresponded with our means of spiritual improvement. Forgive, O God, the misuse of our time and our talents. May we be washed from our sins in that fountain which is opened up for sin and for uncleanness. And we pray that henceforward we may be strengthened with all might by thy Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and that we may be enabled to walk as the children of the light and the children of the day, redeeming the time, because the days are few and evil. Subdue, O God, we beseech thee, our rebellious wills. Purify our sinful desires and affections. Lead us humbly and patiently to acquiesce in all the appointments of thy inscrutable providence, and to say, Good is the will of the Lord. Forbid that we should ever render evil for evil. May the same mind be in us which was in Christ Jesus. And grant that we ever may esteem the riches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Prepare us, we beseech thee, for the hour of death. Believing in him who is the resurrection and the life, may we fear no evil. May our latter end be peace. Show mercy, O Lord, to our friends and kindred. May we and they be fellow-workers together with thee, and heirs together of the grace of life. Clothe thy priests with salvation. Let thy saints shout aloud for joy. May that righteousness extend more and more among us which alone exalteth a nation. And do thou hasten the time when we shall no longer need to teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; but when all shall know thee, from the least even to the greatest. Hear us, O God, and accept of our persons and services, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXVII. 37—40.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS XXIII.

REMARKS.

Josiah having had a respite granted to him, resolved, as we see from this chapter, to make the most of the time that might be given him for the reformation of his subjects and the glory of God. His conduct was just such as will be pursued by every one whose heart has been touched by godly sorrow for sin. The genuine penitent will immediately show his repentance practically in regard to himself, and by zealous efforts for the good of others. Josiah, accordingly, lost no time in calling the people together, and, after reading the threatenings of the law to them, bound them in covenant along with himself, henceforth to worship and serve the Lord. What a beautiful spectacle was that of the young king reading the book of God to his assembled subjects, young and old, acting as 'a preacher of righteousness,' and 'persuading' them, 'by the terror of the Lord,' to repent of their sins. O that all who are in stations of authority and influence would follow his example! And there is almost no man, however humble in rank, who has not a something in his power in this way for which he must render an account unto God. Every person, in his own family and neighbourhood, and circle of acquaintance, may and ought to check and reprove irreligion and vice, to warn and admonish offenders, and to use whatever authority and influence he may possess in leading the young and ignorant, and in constraining the indifferent and unwilling to worship and fear God, and keep his commandments.

Josiah's whole reign appears to have been spent in putting down idolatry, in clearing the land of the abominations by which it was defiled, and in bringing his subjects back to the worship and service of the living God. What a revolting picture do the details of his reforms give us of the corruption and wickedness of God's chosen people, fully as hideous as that presented to us by any profane historian of the religion and morals of ancient times! But in case our faith should be disturbed by this circumstance, let us consider, and we will see, that, in place of discrediting, it tends much to confirm the truth of the sacred records, that they give a plain and unhesitating statement of all this contradiction and unseemliness. While they hold up the Jews as the peculiar people of God, to whom his oracles were committed, and through whom the world was to be blessed, they make no attempt to conceal their faults, and lose no opportunity of indicating how inherently undeserving they were of the divine preference, and that the distinction which they enjoyed flowed entirely from the sovereign choice and free grace of God.

The zealous efforts of the king for the reformation of his subjects, were, for the time, outwardly and partially at least, successful; and after a certain period, he felt himself authorized to command, with due and solemn preparation, befitting such an ordinance, the observance of the passover. But it is beyond the power of any person to make his dearest friend religious and devout—to bring his father or his mother,

his brother or his sister, his wife or his children, to genuine repentance, and the love and fear of God. We can only do our duty by using the means, and must leave the rest to God, with a prayer for his blessing. Josiah did this, and he could do no more. And though the people yielded external obedience to kingly authority, their hearts were not, in general, turned towards God; and amidst all their time-serving compliance, the cup of their guilt was swelling to the brim, and the judgments of heaven were lowering over them. But Josiah being slain in battle with the king of Egypt at Megiddo, beyond the boundaries of his own kingdom, and in what may be called a foreign war, was 'taken away from the evil to come.'

'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for,' however prematurely, and by whatever stroke he may die, 'the end of that man is peace.' 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.'

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the God who didst choose thy people the Jews to be the depositaries of thy knowledge, worship, and will. We rejoice that, besides those indications of thy presence, power, and goodness, which abound all around us, thou didst reveal thyself to thy servant Moses, and spakest to the fathers by the prophets. We thank thee for that record which thou hast given us, of thy dealings with thine ancient people. Bless the portion of it now read for our growth in knowledge, in understanding, and the fear of the Lord. Make us to see, from the idolatry and sinfulness of the Jews, that they were chosen and favoured by thee in the simple exercise of thy sovereign mercy and free grace. May we perceive and feel, from what we have now read, that, whilst thou art very pitiful and of tender mercy, thou art a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and wilt by no means clear the guilty. Give us grace to avoid the sins of thy people of old, that we may avoid their punishment. We are, in many respects, guilty as they were, and are, from day to day, the living monuments of thy mercy. While thy judgments are continually suspended over our heads, O teach and impel us to flee from the wrath to come, unto him who is an hiding-place from the tempest, and a covert from the storm—to him who has borne the sins of his people in his own body on the tree, and through whom there is hope even for the chief of sinners. Touch our hearts, as in the case of Josiah of old, with a godly sorrow for sin; and enable us, like him, to bring forth fruits which are meet for repentance. May we, in imitation of his example, be zealous for thy glory, and the spiritual good of our fellow men. And O vouchsafe unto us the

promise made to him, and its fulfilment, that thou wouldst not take us from the world till thou hast fitted us for leaving it, and till we are ready, let death come when, and in what form it may, resignedly to leave a scene of trouble and sorrow, and to enter into the rest and peace of the Lord. We thank thee for thy preservation of us through the past night, and for the light and the comforts of a new day. Thou art continually bearing with our sins, guarding us from danger, and saving us from death, and giving us time to repent, because thou art not willing that we should perish. O enable us to live under a sense of thy forbearance, and to improve aright the season of our merciful visitation. Take us into thy keeping through this day; fit us for its duties, and its temptations and trials; preserve us from danger and from sin; suit the communications of thy grace to our several states and circumstances; and may the day not pass without each of us making some progress in the Christian life. O send forth thy light and thy truth to enlighten, and to bless, and to redeem mankind. May those in whom we are more especially interested have an interest in thy Son, and in the riches of thy grace. For ourselves we ask the light of thy countenance, and thy favour and friendship, which are better than life. We commend ourselves, soul and body, to thy keeping. Never leave us nor forsake us, and take not thy Spirit from us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LIV.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XVII. 22—34.

REMARKS.

St Paul's preaching at Athens was a remarkable incident in his life. The Athenians were the most enlightened and polished community of ancient times. But the nations of antiquity—and the fact is conclusive as to the necessity of a divine revelation—in proportion as they advanced in other respects in the career of improvement, fell back, in so far as religion was concerned, into a deeper corruption and gloom. The Athenians were 'wholly given to idolatry,' were 'in all things too superstitious;' or, as most likely the apostle meant to say, were religious to an absurd excess, so much so, that, in case any object of worship known to others might have no place in their well-filled catalogue, they had raised an altar 'to the unknown God.' Whether these words had any reference to the invisible I AM, the God of the Jews, or to his Son Jesus Christ, as yet indistinctly heard of by the Athenians, cannot be satisfactorily ascertained. But, at least, the apostle was perfectly war-

ranted in filling up the blank which had been left; and with a view to procure a ready and patient hearing, he assumes, with admirable ingenuity, that the words which he had read referred to the God whom Jews and Christians worshipped, and whom he preached, the one true and living God, now manifested in the flesh in the person of his Son Jesus Christ. 'Whom,' says he, 'ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you:' and then he proceeds to describe the character and government of that God whom he had now 'declared,' in a manner very different from that in which their own ignorant and conceited philosophers were accustomed to speak.

Let us not think, that, because we are professedly Christian, we are free from the sins of the Athenians of old, and require not to be preached to as they were. Ah, we are all of us like them, too much given to the worship of a multiplicity of inferior deities, setting up altars in the heart to every object of worldly and human desire. Do not too many of us, even with a scrupulous observance of decent forms, worship an 'unknown God,' a God with whose character, and word, and grace, we are but little acquainted, and which, to our shame, we have little wish, and make no effort to know any better? Are not God, and Christ, and the doctrines of grace, to the bulk of those who call themselves disciples of Jesus, mere names without a meaning; and what better are such persons than the Athenians of old, who worshipped 'an unknown God?' God will not now, as in times past, 'wink at this ignorance.' 'He now commands all men everywhere to repent,' and to know and believe in his Son, 'whom to know aright is life eternal.' If we would have any thing more than a mere 'name to live with,' and not be contented 'to perish in ignorance,' be it our prayer unto God, that he himself would enlighten our minds, and touch our hearts, and make us 'wise unto salvation.'

But for this purpose we must not only pray, but use the other appointed means of grace which we enjoy in rich abundance. O let us be thankful for the advantages which we possess above those who were preached to by the apostles of old, and call to mind our responsibility, and diligently use the means, praying all the while to God that he would fulfil his promise, by giving his 'excellent power,' and his 'blessing and increase.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Whom have we in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth whom our spirits should desire besides thee. We are thy people, and the sheep of thy pasture; and thou art continually blessing us, and doing us good. We thank thee for what of thy providential care and kindness we have this day experienced. Forgive the sins of which we have been guilty, in thought, word, or deed, during this portion of time, and hide not thy face from us because of our unworthiness. We are undeserving of the smallest of thy loving-kindnesses. We thank

thee, O Lord, for having provided not only for our bodies, but for our souls; not only for our temporal, but for our spiritual wants. Thou hast sent thy Son into the world to save us; and his body has been broken, and his blood shed, for the remission of our sins. O apply unto our souls, by thy Spirit, the benefits that flow from his sacrifice and finished work. Help our unbelief; and grant that we, being justified by faith, may have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. O Lord, we bless thee for the light of the gospel, and for the means of grace with which we are so richly favoured. While so many of our fellow beings are yet sitting in heathen darkness, or worshipping thee under superstitious forms, we have been taught wherewithal to approach the Lord, and how to bow ourselves down before the most high God. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits. And though not now favoured with inspired apostles, we thank thee for the record which thou hast given us of the lives and lessons of those formerly sent—for the holy scriptures, with the liberty and power of perusing them—and for a living ministry of the word, so beautifully suited to our imperfections and our wants, and to which the promise of thy Spirit is annexed. O enable us duly to estimate, and suitably to improve, the means of grace; and let thy blessing rest upon them for the enlightening, and sanctifying, and saving of our souls. Forbid it, we humbly beseech thee, that thy light should shine into our darkness, while our darkness comprehends it not—that amidst means, and professions, and forms, we should be worshipping a God and a Saviour, whom, savingly and practically, we know nothing of. Do thou thyself enlighten our darkness. Make us to know thy Son by the sense of his indwelling presence. Teach us to understand aright the glorious doctrines which he has revealed, and sanctify us by thy truth. Enable us to comply aright with the precepts of his word; and, in the discharge of duty, may his Spirit be a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path. Make our path to be that of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. And O may we derive a holier zeal, and a more determined perseverance, from perusing, as we have now been doing, the record of the lives and labours of thy servants the apostles of old, who, filled with thy Spirit, so nobly contended for, and obtained, the crown of victory. Give us grace to walk in the footsteps of those who, through faith and patience, now inherit the promises. Supply us with the whole armour of God, and make us conquerors, and more than conquerors, through him

that loved us. During the darkness of night, and the insensibility of sleep, we commit ourselves to thy care, for thou carest for us, and thou, the God who keepest Israel, never sleepest nor sleepest. May we awaken to the light of a new day, refreshed by rest, for the cares and toils of this our land of pilgrimage, and invigorated for the better performance of the duties of the Christian life. In darkness and in light, and by night and day, we desire to put our trust and confidence under the shadow of thy wings. Be thou the rock of our salvation, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXX. 1—4.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS XXIV.

REMARKS.

We are informed in the preceding chapter, that the good king Josiah was taken away from sharing in or beholding the judgments that were impending over his country. Previous, however, to the fall and final infliction of God's threatenings, by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonish captivity, there were four short, degrading, and disastrous reigns, each of them in itself a severe and heavy punishment to the Jewish nation. Josiah had four sons, three of whom, as we learn from the close of the preceding chapter, combined with the narrative in this, filled the throne after his death, there being also a short reign immediately before the last, by his grandson Jehoiachin. The brief notices which we have of these princes present a melancholy picture of a falling monarchy, and of a people given up to their own hearts' lusts, and deserted and doomed by God. These kings, though sprung from a worthy sire, were all of them idolatrous, unprincipled, and crouching to their enemies. With regard to all of them in succession, we have the unvarying statement that they 'did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that their fathers had done.'

The books of Kings and Chronicles are merely abridgements, made, it is generally supposed, by Ezra, under the direction of the Spirit of God, of pre-existent and more copious records. And in case any person should think it a task without interest, and of little profit, to review the brief notices set before us in this passage of the lives and reigns of a line of wicked kings, be it remembered that nothing directed to be recorded by the Spirit of God ought to be reckoned dry or uninteresting, and that 'all scripture given by inspiration of God,' is meant and fitted to be 'profitable unto us for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness.' Can it be uninteresting to us to examine the history of that singular people whom God chose for his own, with regard to whom so many prophecies and special dealings are recorded, and from whom has sprung, according to

the flesh, the Saviour of the world, 'the light of the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel?' In every page of Jewish history we are listening to the voice of God, or marking the recorded display of his attributes, of his truth and power, of his wisdom and goodness. Let us read every portion of his word reverently, and with a view to profit. Do we not see, from the history of the Jewish kings, that the Almighty ruleth not only in heaven above, but on the earth beneath—that he never speaketh but in truth—and that his arm now can stay? Do we not see, that, while he is 'glorious in holiness,' and 'will by no means clear the guilty,' he is, at the same time, most pitiful, forbearing, and indulgent? Are we not impelled by the record of God's promises and threatenings, of his judgments and mercies, to love, fear, and obey him,—to render ourselves in willing homage to, and to put our trust and confidence in one, who, though his way may be sometimes dark and mysterious to us, always 'doeth that which is right?'

The prominent sin of the Jewish people, and that which more especially brought down the judgments of heaven upon them, was idolatry. Let us not think, that we are free from their guilt in this respect, and have therefore no interest in the threatenings addressed to them, and in the punishment inflicted on them. Ah, there may be idolatry in a thousand vile and debasing shapes, without the formal worshipping of 'stocks and stones.' The Almighty not only requires of us to 'have no other God before him,' but to 'love him with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind;' to worship and serve him in sincerity and truth. He is not more displeased, of course, with those who pay homage to outward idols, than with those who obey their own lusts in preference of him; and who draw nigh unto him with the mouth, and honour him with the lips alone, while the heart is far from him.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the King of kings and as the Lord of lords, who doest according to thy will in heaven above, and on the earth beneath. Thou art the supreme disposer of events; and though thy way be sometimes in the cloud, in the tempest, and in the great deep, we rejoice in the consoling assurance and persuasion, that thou, the Judge of all the earth, wilt do that which is right. Thou hast in every age vindicated the majesty of thy character and the purity of thy laws, by the bared arm of thy vengeance. Thou hast made mankind to feel when they have refused to own, that thou rulest in the armies of heaven, and amidst the habitations of men. Thou art a jealous God, who wilt not share thy glory and praise with another. Because thine ancient people provoked thee to anger by their high places, and moved thee to jealousy by their graven images, thou didst deliver their strength unto captivity, and their glory into the enemy's hand. O enable us to love and serve thee, the one true and living God.

through the Saviour and Mediator whom thou hast given us. We confess with shame and confusion of face, that, professing ourselves to be thy worshippers, we have not given ourselves to know, to understand, or to seek after thee. Calling ourselves by the name of Christ, we have not devoted ourselves to his service. We follow the thoughts of the imaginations of our own hearts; allowing the world to have the dominion over us, and being lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. We worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is over all, God blessed for ever. O punish us not in thy wrath, but draw us unto thyself with the cords of love and the bands of affection. Turn us, and we shall be turned; draw us, and we will run after thee. Make us willing and obedient in the day of thy power. We rejoice that we have a Surety and Intercessor, with whom thou art ever well pleased and whom thou hearest always. May we be joined to him as our covenant Head, by a true and living faith. May he be formed in our souls the hope of glory, and do thou assimilate us to his holy image. Look upon us in mercy in the face of thine Anointed, and give us the adoption and privileges of thy children. We would know none other save Christ, and him crucified. While others are saying, Who will show us any good? may the language of our souls at all times be, Lord, lift upon us the light of thy countenance. Enable us to count all things as loss, as less than nothing and vanity, in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. We bless thee, O Lord, that on this the morning of another day we are in the land of the living, and the place of hope; that we are again privileged to read thy word, and to address thee in prayer. To whom can we go but unto thee, whose goodness is new to us every morning, and with whom alone are the words of eternal life? Give unto us, from day to day, our daily bread; but more especially nourish and refresh our souls by the communication of thy grace. Whilst thou art giving unto us the light of the natural sun, vouchsafe unto us the healing beams of the Sun of righteousness. Shine into our hearts and make us wise unto salvation. O cause thy kingdom to come and thy will to be done on earth. Forgive our enemies and befriend our friends, and fill the world with the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, and joy, and peace. Enable us throughout this day to live in thy fear, and to thy glory and praise; and keep our feet from falling, and our eyes from tears, for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LIX.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XVIII.

REMARKS.

Let us attend for a little to two or three of the more prominent incidents recorded in this chapter.

1. St Paul, while living with Aquila at Corinth, wrought with his hands for his support. This is not meant to afford a general rule and example for the ministers of the gospel. The care of souls is too important to be interfered with by other cares and toils of a merely temporal and worldly kind. It is the rule of the gospel that the spiritual labourer is to receive an extrinsic support, a support from others who have the benefit of his ministrations. 'The labourer,' said our Lord to the seventy, 'is worthy of his hire;' and St Paul himself (1 Cor. ix. 14) lays it down as a rule, 'that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.' The apostle's case at Corinth was a special one. He had come to that city a stranger; for some time, it would appear, he was not especially engaged in the work of the ministry, beyond what he could accomplish by his attendance at the synagogue on sabbath days; there was no Christian church as yet in Corinth, whose support he might claim or receive; he was living as a private Christian in the house of Aquila, waiting God's time; and, that he might not be burdensome to a poor and hospitable family, who had given him a kind reception, he wrought with them at their trade of tent-making, which, in conformity with Jewish custom, he had learned in his youth. Let all devout servants of God, when similarly circumstanced, do as he did. It is at once a part of the punishment of the fall, to which we must submit, and a rule of God's providence enforced by precept, with which we are bound to comply, that we are to earn our bread by the sweat of our brow, or by the more fatiguing labours of the mind, by the anxieties and toils of public station and professional life,—that in some shape or other we are to be useful in our day and generation in the world. Let no one be ashamed of honest industry in any of its forms: for there is nothing shameful but idleness or sin. The one of these always leads to, or is produced by, the other.

2. At Corinth, St Paul, when depressed in spirit, had a vision for his encouragement. Besides his more ordinary communications with men, by means of his Spirit, in various modes and with greater or less vividness of excitement and conscious feeling, the Almighty has from time to time made himself more familiarly known to his chosen agents by impressing their senses. St Paul had 'a vision in the night,' that is, he had a visible token of the divine presence, and heard the voice of the Lord, even of that Lord who had spoken to him so strikingly before, and which he could not mistake, saying to him, 'Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city.' The command here given to the apostle, to persevere in his ministry, is backed by two considerations,—first, an assurance that his Master would co-operate with him and

protect him from danger, a promise without which no servant of Christ durst attempt the discharge of his duty; and, secondly, the fact, that though unknown to him, there were many heirs of glory in Corinth, who were to be called to faith and to salvation by his means. 'In that city God had much people,'—his by eternal decree, though still heathen in life and profession, and requiring to be called to the gospel by the preaching of the word: for 'whom he doth predestinate them he also calls.' Let the ministers of Christ take to themselves the exhortation and the encouragements addressed to Paul. They never can know 'the people who are God's' among their audience and flock till they try perseveringly, and are not to estimate the ultimate result of their labours by their vexation and disappointment at any given time. Let them 'not be afraid, but speak, and hold not their peace;' and though they are not to expect any 'vision' for their encouragement, 'the vision' vouchsafed to Paul is recorded for their sakes, and the promise made to him, extends through the Spirit, to them likewise, wherever God 'has people' to be called—that is, wherever there are perishing sinners, who, for any thing that man can know, may be the subjects of divine grace and redeeming love.

3. We see from the case of Apollos, (verses 24—28,) that if we turn what means we enjoy to the right account, more grace shall be given us. Because he had improved aright the ministry and baptism of John, his mind was opened to the enjoyment of gospel light; he was filled with the Spirit, and appointed a fellow-labourer with the apostles. 'He who is faithful over a few things, shall be made ruler over many things.'

PRAYER.

We rejoice in thee, O Lord, as the hearer and answerer of prayer. We would in all things, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make our requests known unto thee. Teach us to ask of thee aright, and fit us for receiving the blessings which we implore. Give unto us such a portion of temporal and worldly good as thou knowest to be suitable and convenient for us. But above all, give us the pardon of our sins and the salvation of our souls, and a right to the inheritance of the saints in light. Make us to hunger and to thirst for righteousness, that our souls may be filled out of the abundance of thy grace. Dwell in us richly in all wisdom, and furnish us with the gifts of thy Spirit. As the God of providence, thou hast covered the face of nature with thy benefits; thou preservest man and beast, and bountifully suppliest the wants of every living thing. But do thou teach us, thy rational children, to live under the deep impression of the curse pronounced at the fall, that we are to earn our bread by the sweat of our brow. Enable us to comply with the command of thy word, and to use the means presented to us, in the course of thy providence, for procuring our

temporal subsistence. Contemplating the example of our Redeemer and his apostles, may we be diligent in our ordinary callings, while we are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. O enable us to labour not only for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life. Give us grace to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, that all other things may be added unto us. Lord, though we expect not to be favoured, like thy servant the apostle, with any visible sign of thy presence, or with the sound of thy voice, do thou at all times vouchsafe unto us the light of thy reconciled countenance, and the joy of thy directing and consoling Spirit. Yea, cause thy Spirit to witness with ours that we are thy children. Lord, we are living in a world of many difficulties and temptations. O prevent the world from having the dominion over us. May we not, like Gallio, be indifferent, either in regard to ourselves or others, to the things that are unseen and eternal. Fill our souls with that wisdom which is the principal thing, and make us to care chiefly for the one thing needful to the soul. Enable us when we vow and promise to thee, to do so in sincerity and truth, and in dependence on thy strength. Make us, like St Paul, scrupulous in fulfilling our engagements, and let the praise and glory be all thine own. O Lord, we are dependent on the breath of thy mouth. Thou speakest the word and we die, and are converted into our kindred dust. In all our wishes, and intentions, and plans, may we feel our short-sightedness and our weakness. May our language at all times be that of thine inspired servant, If God will. Give us grace to copy the example of Apollo, and to improve the means that we enjoy, in the hope that a larger measure of light and grace shall be given us. Instruct us perfectly in thy way. Fit us for thy service in this present world, and for the enjoyment of thy presence in bliss and glory, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXX.

SCRIPTURE—2 KINGS XXV.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—7. Zedekiah having rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, to whom he had sworn submission, (Ezek. xvii. 13—15.) the latter lays siege to Jerusalem. The Egyptians having come to Zedekiah's aid, the Chaldeans are obliged to raise the siege. After a time, however, the king of Babylon returns

with his army, the city is taken, and Zedekiah, his sons being slain, and his eyes put out, is taken to Babylon. For an account of the siege and famine, see Jer. chap. xxxvii, xxxviii, xxxix. Jeremiah (xxxiv. 3.) foretold that Zedekiah's eyes should behold the eyes of the king of Babylon. Ezekiel (xii. 13.) foretold that his eyes should not behold Babylon itself, though he should die there. A singular coincidence, without the least apparent concert.

Ver. 8—21. After a short period the king of Babylon sends his captain, Nebuzar-adan, to complete the destruction of Jerusalem. The temple and all the principal houses are burnt; the walls are broken down; the people are carried into captivity, with the exception of a few of 'the poor of the land.' What remained of the furniture of the temple, after the former pillaging by Nebuchadnezzar, is taken away, together with the chief priest and some other persons of note, who are slain at Riblah.

Ver. 22—26. The people who remained in the land still manifested the same distrust of God, and the same tendency to trust in Egypt for help. For Ishmael having slain the governor whom Nebuchadnezzar set over them, they being afraid of the Chaldees, fled into Egypt, utterly heedless of the assurances of Jeremiah, that they were quite safe, and that there all the evils they feared would certainly reach them, as Jehovah had decreed to deliver Egypt into the hands of the king of Babylon. See Jer. xl—xli.

Ver. 27—30. This Jehoiachin, called elsewhere, Jeremiah, or Coniah, preceded Zedekiah. He reluctantly surrendered himself to Nebuchadnezzar in the eighth year of his reign, when the temple was first sacked, and the principal people were made captives. He was a very wicked prince, and the divine denunciations were particularly pointed at him, Jer. xxii. 24—30. This lightening of his captivity was creditable to the character of Evil-merodach. It may perhaps also be regarded as a proof that, as to Manasseh, his affliction had been sanctified to him. It was certainly a sign that God had not forgotten his people, but that he would, at the expiry of the seventy years of captivity, lift up his people from bondage, and bring them to their own land. The whole record of God's dealings with his ancient people, especially that portion of it now under consideration, is full of painful interest, and salutary instruction, 1 Cor. x. 11. We see in it a proof of his hatred against sin, since he could not pass it by unpunished even in them, Amos iii. 2. We see in it a proof of his faithfulness in fulfilling his threatenings to the very letter, Deut. xxviii. We see in it a proof of his long-suffering, in sending prophet after prophet to warn them, and in bringing their punishment on them gradually, and affording space for repentance, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14, 15. We see in it a proof that there is a close connection between the character of rulers and the character and destiny of a people. Hezekiah and Josiah retarded the growing degeneracy and ruin of Judah. Under Jehoiachin and Zedekiah the cup was filled to the brim, (2 Kings xxiv. 15—20.) We see in it a proof that national sins bring national judgments; that 'the Lord is governor among the nations,' and will vindicate his authority as such, Jer. v. 9. We see in it, in fine,

a proof of God's unchanging love to his people; for though he punished them severely, he did not altogether cast them off. As he raised up a Nebuchadnezzar to carry them captive, he raised up a Cyrus to deliver them in due time, Isa. xxvii. 7—9.

PRAYER.

Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of nations. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest. When we see thy fierce indignation towards individuals and communities, we are taught to stand in awe of thee and sin not. We do homage to thy holiness, thy faithfulness, thy justice, thy power. We tremble for ourselves as a church and as a nation, remembering in how many points we resemble in character thine ancient people. We have, like them, great privileges; we are, like them, great transgressors. O may we not resemble them in doom. We deprecate thy justly deserved wrath. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him. Truly we are a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers. We would sigh and cry for the abominations in the midst of us; profane swearing, sabbath profanation, intemperance, impurity, error and vice of all kinds. The enemy cometh in like a flood; O Spirit of the Lord, lift up a standard against him. Revive, purify, and enlarge thy church. Revive personal and family religion. Excite a spirit of prayer, a spirit of inquiry, a spirit of love, and ardour, and devotedness. Raise greatly the love of piety among thy people. Give us more elevation and warmth of feeling; more clearness and enlargement of view; more energy and fervour of action. And for this end, pour forth in larger measure the Spirit of all grace. Is not Jesus glorified; is not the Spirit promised; is not the world dead in sin; is not thy church itself languishing? Thus may we escape the doom which, as a people, we deserve. Thus may each one, from the sovereign downwards, through all the degrees of society, study to promote thy glory. Thus may piety, and peace, and prosperity bless our land. And thus, too, may we set an example to all nations of obedience to Christ, the King, who sits on the holy hill of Zion. For all our past mercies, for health and plenty, and the rest of many a quiet night, we bless thee. For the new duties, and trials, and

temptations of each successive day, we beseech thee to prepare us. And our duties, and trials, and temptations being at last finished, may we set up our everlasting rest in thy house above, through the merits and mediation of our blessed Saviour and Lord, whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, we equally acknowledge and adore. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXXIX.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS xix. 1—20.

REMARKS.

1. *The true baptism*, Ver. 1—7. It is not easy to decide upon the precise character of these persons. Though they professed to be of John's baptism, some think they could not have been instructed and baptized by the Baptist himself, else they would not have been ignorant of the Holy Ghost; for, said he, 'I indeed have baptized you with water, but he (Christ) shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.' But perhaps their ignorance was rather of those extraordinary influences of the Spirit, bestowed in those days, on believers in Christ, after his resurrection, (John vii. 39.) and to which reference is made in the 6th verse. On this subject, the person and work of the Holy Ghost, even at the present day, much ignorance and positive error exist. Some deny the doctrine altogether, ridiculing and blaspheming; others, who will not go this length, regard the whole subject with much suspicion; others are extremely general and indefinite in their views. And others, the most numerous class, while they do know speculatively that there is a Holy Ghost, are altogether experimentally unacquainted with him, not only with his extraordinary influences—for these are now ceased—but with his ordinary and saving influences. They have, indeed, heard that there is a Holy Ghost; they have heard of conviction of sin, and of regeneration, and of peace of conscience, and of the inward witness; they have heard of such things, but that is all. They have never felt them. These things are not personal to them; for any effort in their own souls, there might as well be no Holy Ghost at all. And into what baptism, then, we may well ask, have they been baptized? Unto John's baptism? No truly, but in the name of him of whom his forerunner said, 'He shall baptize with the Holy Ghost.' But they are satisfied with the sign, and seek not the thing signified. Let us bring them back to first principles; let us put them in mind of their baptism. The doctrine of spiritual influence is the doctrine specially testified to in the ordinance of baptism. And by our baptism we are to be continually reminded of our need of the indwelling and operation of the Holy Ghost. This is the true baptism; this the true washing, of which we must be partakers, 1 Pet. iii. 21; Rom. vi. 4. Yes, there is indeed a Holy Ghost; a real, distinct, di-

vine person constituting, together with the Father and the Son, the true God, and dwelling in the hearts of all believers. It is a most sublime and elevating truth. To know it experimentally is religion. Reader, hast thou received the Holy Ghost?

2. *Paul disputing at Ephesus*, Ver. 8—12. The apostle was not afraid of the freest and fullest investigation. He knew Christianity would bear it, and therefore he sought it. He challenged it, he urged the subject in the notice of all in the most public way. He was the aggressor; he began the controversy here and everywhere else. And thus we are taught not to leave the enemies of the truth in the undisturbed possession of any one field, but to meet them face to face, and argument to argument. An aversion to disputation arises more frequently from timidity and indifference than from true piety. Controversy has in all ages been one useful and necessary means of spreading the truth. We have the example of apostles in its favour. While boldness led the apostle to enter into the synagogue and dispute three months, prudence led him to retire, and choose another sphere of labour, where he thought he would labour with greater probability of success. No scene of duty, however unpromising, is to be hastily abandoned. But when ungodly men not only refuse the truth themselves, but throw impediments in the way of others who might receive it, they must be left to themselves, and success sought among others.

3. *Satan forced to cast out Satan, or an evil spirit's testimony to Jesus*, Ver. 13—17. It was a bold attempt of these exorcists to use the name and power of Jesus to overthrow his religion; and it was a noble triumph that was obtained over them, when their attacks were not only foiled, but made to recoil upon themselves. What a satisfactory proof that Jesus has complete control over the spirits of darkness; and can direct at will all their craft and power, and make that an encouraging assurance that the gates of hell shall never prevail against the truth, when we see hell itself, at his command, doing homage to it.

4. *The triumphs of the truth*, Ver. 18—20. See how one pillar after another of Satan's kingdom gives way. See how error flies before the truth, as the shades of night before the rising sun. It was no small sacrifice these persons made of their influence, and of their gain. When the mind is really brought under the influences of religious truth, it conceives a total disrelish for much of the world's literature, as vain, frivolous, and impious. A sacrifice is at once, and cheerfully, made of many of the fine arts, and of the productions of genius and intellect, which have a tendency to draw away the heart from God.

PRAYER.

We would acknowledge and worship thee, O Jehovah, in all that fullness of character in which thou art revealed in thy word. We adore thee as the tri-une God. Thou art, O Father, together with the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the only living and true God, and we would have thee to be our God. We desire to choose thee,

O Father, as our Father; thee, O Son, as our Saviour; thee, O Spirit, as our Sanctifier. We desire to know thee with that special, saving, sanctifying knowledge which thy people, illuminated by thy Spirit, have of thee. We would acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace with him. Give us to know experimentally the love of God the Father, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. Give us, we are especially led to pray at this time, to know experimentally that there is indeed a Holy Ghost. While in words we recognise him, in his person as divine, in his work as the applier of redemption to the soul, let us not be strangers to him in our hearts. May we know him by his dwelling in us, and working in us, showing us the evil of sin, and producing that godly sorrow for sin which worketh repentance unto salvation; revealing Christ to us as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, sanctifying us wholly, and sealing us to the day of Jesus Christ. Descend, O Spirit of life, and light, and peace, and holiness, and abundantly baptize these souls of ours. We would cherish thy motions; we would lay our minds open to them; we would cease to indulge in those frames by which thou art grieved. We cannot live without thee. Too little have we valued thee, and sought thine aid, and therefore are we so low and dull. Wilt thou not enlarge, and quicken, and refresh, and strengthen us. Return and revive thy drooping church. Raise up many faithful men, at home and abroad, boldly to dispute and persuade the things concerning the kingdom of God; and grant that the gospel being preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, signs and wonders may be done in the name of thy holy child Jesus. May we witness the triumphs of the gospel everywhere. May the word of God mightily grow and prevail. May every system of error fall before the claims of truth; and genius, and power, and wealth, unite all their exhibitions, and lay them on the altar of Christianity Lord Jesus! give us such impressions of thy love, that we shall be constrained to sacrifice every thing for thy sake, at thy command. We are thine, and all that we have is thine, and all is too little to recompense thy love. Accept of us and ours, and through thine all-prevailing mediation, may our prayers and all our services be accepted, our sins forgiven, and our souls sanctified. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXII. 10—14.

SCRIPTURE—1 CHRON. XXIX.

REMARKS.

'Lord, teach me to know the end and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am,' was a prayer which David had put up some time before; (see Psalm xxxix. 4.) It is a prayer which we have all need to utter, as we are very apt to deceive ourselves; to think that to-morrow will be as this day, and to promise ourselves a long and healthy life. It is pleasant to observe that David had received an answer to his prayer; that he is conscious of his infirmities, and speaks of himself as a stranger and pilgrim, and that he is making calm preparations for his approaching decease. We discover in his old age the ruling principle of his life (the love of God, and a desire to promote his glory) now strengthened and increased. The greatest warrior of his nation is employing the peaceful evening of his old age in completing what had occupied so many of his thoughts—his preparations for building the temple. What a noble example did he set to his people, and that son who was soon to mount his throne! While all the people seem to have offered willingly, he particularly called upon the chiefs and rulers to countenance, by their gifts, the service of the true God. As this service partook of none of the peculiarities of the Levitical law, we may safely reckon it as an example to all who are in places of authority in Christian times. It is worthy of notice, that while David and his people gave so liberally, they were not vain of their generosity, nor did they look upon their good deeds as having any justifying merit. They reckoned it a privilege to be permitted to give; and were conscious, that being mere stewards of the bounties of God's providence, they were only giving to the Lord a small part of what they had received from him. We may repeat the question, 'Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?' The circumstances of God's church are altered, and his people are required, not as in the time of legal ceremonies, to build a magnificent temple of stone, but to aid in building that holy and spiritual temple of which Christ is the foundation, and his saints the lively stones. There are waste places in our land to be built up—our brethren in foreign lands are crying, Come over and help us—the command is still binding, 'Go and teach all nations'—and David's own people, now without a nation and a temple, must be brought to acknowledge the Son of David as their King—and even as they destroyed the temple of his body, they must be made to take part in rearing that other temple, which is the church, according to the language of the apostle, that their conversion shall be as life from the dead. The sum contributed by David could not have been less in value than fifteen millions of our money in gold, and that contributed by the people was not less than twenty-five millions, besides the other metals, and this from a small country of about one hundred and fifty miles in length, and seventy in breadth. Let us not stop

short our missionary exertions till we obtain an offering like this to the cause of Christ. What would our nation have been without the blessings of the gospel? a rude and barbarous region, without arts, or commerce, or wealth. Let us devote some of that wealth which Christianity has procured to the promotion of Christianity.

What a varied and chequered life was that of David! Reared in the simple profession of a shepherd, he had become a favourite of his prince, a leader of armies, and finally he had risen to the throne of Israel. Yet his life was far from presenting a course of uninterrupted prosperity. We read of him now obliged to flee for his life from the presence of a capricious king, and again from before a son to whom he was deeply attached. It is pleasant to observe that his death is peaceful. 'Mark thou the perfect, and behold the upright, for surely the latter end of that man is peace,' had been his own language. He had fallen into many and grievous sins; but he still held firm his faith, and grace was given to repent. Now, with the sanctified use of all his trials, which were made, like the showers of summer, to promote the growth of the fruit, he is, like a ripe shock of corn, in full maturity of age, ready to be taken into the garner of God. While we sing his psalms on earth, he, the 'sweet psalmist,' is singing a sweeter strain than ever he did in this world, in the mansions above, to the praise of his Redeemer. There have been disputes among the learned as to what is meant by the books mentioned in this passage; they were probably public national records now lost; but this we know, that his name was written in the book of life, and his deeds are recorded in the bible for our instruction.

PRAYER.

O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, enable us to worship thee with that which is thine own, even with thy grace within us. We know not what we should pray for as we ought. Let the Spirit itself help our infirmities, and make intercession within us with groanings which cannot be uttered. We thank thee for the many national, and family, and personal blessings which we enjoy. We bless thee for having cast our lines in pleasant places, in a land where we have thy sanctuary, and have heard the glad tidings of salvation proclaimed. We rejoice to think that thou art not confined to temples made with hands, and that thou art present wherever there are true worshippers to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. We pray of thee to bless this household, as of old thou blessedst the house of Obededom, when the ark of the covenant was there. We are, O Lord, no longer our own; we are bought with a price, even the precious blood of our Redeemer. We desire to dedicate unto thee our bodies and our souls, all that is ours, and all that is dependent on us. We have received all our blessings from thee; we desire to

consecrate them to thy service. We lament before thee that we have been living unworthy of the holy vocation wherewith we have been called. There is a law in our members warring against the law of our minds. Do thou of thy free mercy in Christ forgive our trespasses, and enable us to grow in grace as we grow in years. In thy hands are the hearts of all men, and thou turnest them as thou turnest the channels of water: do thou turn us, and we shall be turned; change us, and we shall be changed. Dispose us to use the world as not abusing it; and prepare our hearts to devote what wealth thou hast given us to the glory of the great Giver, and of our Redeemer. While in the enjoyment of rich and precious privileges ourselves, we should think of those who are sitting under the shadow of death, and dwelling in the abodes of cruelty. Send forth labourers to the harvest, and builders to raise thy spiritual temple. Add daily to the church of such as shall be saved, till incense and a pure offering rise as from one temple from all nations of the earth. We pray for our queen, and all in places of authority. Make all our kings and queens nursing fathers and nursing mothers of the Israel of God. We pray for the sick, the dying, and the aged, that their names may be found written in the Lamb's book of life. We are all here pilgrims and strangers, as were all our fathers. Enable us to set our affections on things above, and live in the hope of a glorious immortality. We thank thee for the footsteps of the flock, the elders who have obtained a good report, and who, being dead, yet speak unto us. Enable us to follow them as they followed Christ. To us to live may it be Christ, and to die great gain. All that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LIX. 1—4.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XIX. 21—41.

REMARKS.

Our attention is called in this passage to several noble features in the character of the apostle. Though he had already traversed many nations, and undergone innumerable trials, he is not satisfied that he has done enough. In obedience to his own maxim, 'forgetting the things that are behind,' he presses on to those that are before, and he will not stop till he has given one other warning voice to his countrymen at Jerusalem, and attacked paganism in its very stronghold in the capital of the Roman empire. He undertakes all this with experimental evidence, that wherever he goes he will be subjected to perils by the heathen, and perils by his own countrymen, and

that he will have to face the dangers of the great deep, and the tumults of the people. Let us observe, also, that his zeal is tempered by wisdom; and that while 'in the spirit,' he purposes to undertake so much, he resolves in providence to send individuals before him to make preparations for the more effectual exercise of his ministry, and he yields to the suggestions of his friends, when his own undaunted courage would have exposed him unnecessarily to danger.

It is very interesting to notice, through his instrumentality and that of others, the rapid progress of the gospel; and our information on this subject, is all the more satisfactory, from the circumstance that it is not given in a boasting spirit by the historian, but comes out incidentally from the mouth of an enemy. It was yet only fifteen or sixteen years from the resurrection of Christ, and by this time we learn from the testimony of Demetrius, that much people had turned from the worship of 'gods made with hands' throughout the whole of Asia Minor; embracing, among others, the provinces of Bithynia, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Cilicia, Pamphylia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, Phrygia, Troas, and Lydia, which provinces contained several of the wealthiest and most populous cities in the world. The gospel made such extraordinary progress in the face of the most formidable opposition. The degraded worship of the Greeks and Romans addressed itself alike to the weakness of the superstitious, and the licentious passions of the dissolute; and had closely connected itself with national institutions and family customs, and with the vested rights of various trades. The temple of Diana at Ephesus was distinguished for its splendour. It had been 200 years in building, and all the provinces of Asia had given contributions. It was 425 feet in length, 220 in breadth, and its pillars, 60 feet high, were 127 in number, and had been presented by as many kings. The city of Ephesus was guardian of this temple, and managers of its revenues and offices, which was the source both of honour and emolument. Besides the criminals who fled to its courts for an asylum, there were the priests and the priestesses, and the workers in silver, who made representations on medals, or models in cast work, of the portico and temple of Diana,—all having an interest in opposing the pure religion of Jesus. We have here a very humiliating view of the effects of paganism. The people blindly worshipping a dumb idol, and the upper classes, like the town clerk, feigning a belief in these superstitions, and flattering the people in order to delude them. When we consider what opposition the gospel had to meet, we have in its early triumphs, a satisfactory evidence of its divine power and inherent strength. The truth has still similar obstacles to contend against; it is only by the accompanying grace of God that it can obtain admission to a single breast, or be propagated throughout a nation. It has difficulties arising from the natural enmity of the heart towards God—from the offence of the cross—from the selfishness of man—from the love of money, the root of all evil—from sectarian pride, and professional and party zeal. Let us examine ourselves, in order to see if we are not placing obstacles in the way of the promulgation of

the truth, in our own hearts, or in the world. Let us especially be on our guard against those sins to which our trades or professions may be more particularly exposed; and, in the consciousness of weakness, let us pray God to help us to examine ourselves, and let us say, 'Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou us from secret faults.'

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever blessed God, before committing ourselves to the helplessness of sleep, we desire to commit our bodies and never-dying souls to the care of the great Shepherd of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps. Do thou give refreshing sleep to our bodies, the influence of thy spirit to our souls. If it should be thy will to spare us to a new morning, may our first and best thoughts be of thee. Early will we seek thee, that we may rejoice in thy love all the day. We thank thee for sparing us during the past day amidst the sins we have committed, our ingratitude, folly, and provocations. We lament before thee over the natural enmity of our heart towards God, and our indifference to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. We have too often, by our sins, been bringing reproach upon the cause of Christ, and causing the enemy to blaspheme. O Lord, our hearts are deceitful above all things, do thou teach us to know ourselves, and the iniquities that prevail against us, and the sins that do more easily beset us. Give us to see ourselves as thou seest us, and to know ourselves as we are known by thee, the Searcher of hearts. Cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. We rejoice to think, that we have, in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, all we stand in need of,—a balm for every wound, a comfort for every sorrow, a hope for every despondency, and a very present help in time of need. Trusting in thy promises, we will come and prove thee, and see if thou wilt not open the windows of heaven and pour down a blessing, so that there will not be room to receive it. Supply all our deficiencies out of the fullness that is in Christ. Wherein we are weak, do thou make us strong; wherein we are in darkness, lead us unto marvellous light; what time we are in perplexity, lead us to the rock that is higher than we are. We desire to admire the wisdom and goodness of God in his dealings towards his church and people. We bless thee because thou hast given some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. We bless thee for having brought the glad tidings of salvation to us, even to the dis-

tant isles in which we live. We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the days of old. Awake, awake, put on strength. O arm of the Lord, awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. We pray for those who set themselves against the extension and purification of the church. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Arrest the wicked and the gainsayer by that grace which changed the persecutor into an apostle. Let thy kingdom come, let thy will be done; let it be done over all the earth, and let it be done in our hearts. All that we ask is for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXII. 26.

SCRIPTURE—EZRA I. III.

REMARKS.

The proclamation itself, in the beginning of the first chapter, both grants permission to the Jews to return, and encourages, if it does not positively command, the supply of the poor with the means of achieving the journey, and of contributing to the expense of rebuilding the house of the Lord,—a practical and monitory lesson to modern governments, whose aim it ought to be, while they stand by the great and important principle of toleration, at the same time to promote the influence of a religion celestial and divine! Ver. 7—11. informs us how the proclamation was obeyed: (1.) Many of the people, accepting of the king's permission, proceeded to Jerusalem, on the sacred errand of building the house of the Lord. (2.) Their neighbours supported and encouraged them by their contributions to the cause. (3.) Cyrus himself restored the vessels of the Jewish temple which Nebuchadnezzar had brought to Babylon. In accordance with these three facts, let us all, in our several spheres, contribute to the maintenance and promotion of the cause of God, and let kings and governments reckon it alike their duty and their privilege, by their contributions and their countenance, to aid in building the temple of the Lord.

In the third chapter we have a beautiful picture both of natural and of religious feeling. A considerable number of the exiled Hebrews had now returned to their father-land, and settled in their respective cities. But there was one spot, which, in other days, had often attracted to itself the scattered inhabitants of Judea, and that spot had peculiar attraction still. Thither, as of old, 'the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, to give thanks unto his name.' What a striking representation is given of the cordiality and unanimity which characterized this most interesting visit to the sacred city, when, in the first verse of the chapter, it is said: 'the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.'

Equally striking and impressive is the record contained in the six succeeding verses of the services in which they there engaged. Thus, when we receive some signal favour from Almighty God, to him let us willingly and thankfully devote our substance and ourselves. But is he not daily showering ten thousand blessings on our heads? and are we not every hour dependent on his care? Duly, then, as evening summons us to look backwards on a day of blessings, and morning calls us from the rest which our heavenly Guardian gives us to the duties and enjoyments of a day, which bears in its bosom new and multiplying tokens of his grace, let us present a willing offering to the Lord—an offering, like that of the returning exiles sanctioned, prompted, guided by the authoritative law of Israel's God. Nor let our 'set feasts'—our special festivals of sabbatic rest and sacramental fellowship—be unobserved. These let us celebrate with serious and solemn, yet grateful and rejoicing hearts. And by our efforts, our contributions, and our prayers, let us seek, not only that we ourselves may enjoy in greater plenitude the privileges of Christian worship, but that these privileges may be extended to those by whom, at present, they are either not at all, or very imperfectly possessed. The remainder of the chapter relates, with great beauty, the founding of the house of the Lord, and the gratitude and rejoicing of the people on the occasion. How meet that a public blessing should be received with public gratitude! Nevertheless, on the part of 'the ancient men, who had seen the first house,' tears were mingled with the shout of joy. These natural tears we should not, perhaps, severely blame. And O! how faithful a representation does the mingled shout of weeping and rejoicing give of the general aspect of the world, and of that natural law of the human mind, by which even scenes of gladness may prompt the feeling of agony or gloom!

PRAYER.

Father of mercies, we would now call on thy name with thanksgiving; and met together as we now are before thee on the morning of another day, we give thee thanks for all thy great and long-continued care and kindness towards us. We thank thee for the protection and refreshment which thou hast afforded us through the past night. We thank thee for health, and understanding, and friendship, and freedom, and peace, and all the other blessings of our temporal condition. And O! we thank thee that thou gavest thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life; that thy holy word has brought the message of salvation to our ears, and that whosoever will, may take of the water of life freely. God of salvation, grant that the privileges for which we praise thee, we may rightly use, and that, by the merits of thine atoning Son, we may enjoy the glorious blessings which he has purchased and procured for

men. Being justified by faith, may we have peace with God. May we walk, day by day, in the light of thy countenance, and in thy favour may our horn be exalted. In our case, as in the case of all true believers, may the faith which justifies, prove a faith which sanctifies. May it induce us to resist the temptations to which we are exposed, to avoid the sins to which we are prone, and to seek, in a patient continuance in well-doing, glory, honour, and immortality. And in connection with Christian faith and Christian holiness, may our hearts be comforted and refreshed with Christian peace. Grant us even now the foretaste and earnest of the glory yet to be revealed. And receive us, at the last, to that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away. Meanwhile, bless to our use the dispensations of thy providence, the ordinances of thy worship, and the instructions of thy word. May that portion of scripture which we have now heard, be impressed by the Holy Spirit on our minds. Excite our hearts, by means of it, to greater ardour in thy cause. And while we yield thee the unworthy offerings of our contributions, our efforts, and our prayers, establish thou upon us the work of our hands; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it. Assist us in the duties of this day, guide us amidst its difficulties, defend us from its dangers, and render its experience useful to our souls. Bless all others whom we are bound to commit to thy care and mercy, and grant that, in the intercourse of life, we may do good, as we have opportunity, to all men. Hear us, Almighty God, in these our prayers, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed blessing, and honour, and glory, and praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXIII.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XX.

REMARKS.

In the first six verses of this chapter, we have a striking illustration of Christian brotherhood. The 'one faith, the one Lord, the one baptism, the one God and Father of all,' constitute a principle which unites Christ's followers together. And it must surely have refreshed the apostle's heart, 'when the Jews laid wait for him,' to feel that, if he had enemies, he had also friends, and that if the one were fierce, the other were faithful. In connection with the narrative contained in ver. 7—12. it may be re-

marked: (1.) That, how unreasonable soever it may be, in the case of a common occasion and a promiscuous audience, to protract for many hours the public services of religion, yet at extraordinary times, and in the presence of worshippers who are all 'of one heart and of one soul,' it may be useful and commendable to carry out those services to an unusual length. (2.) That, while it is recorded, somewhat to the discredit of Eutychus, that during the service 'he had fallen into a deep sleep,' instances frequently occur of persons sleeping in the house of God, that have not even such circumstances to palliate them as the youth of the individual, the lateness of the hour, and the protraction of the service. (3.) That whereas Eutychus is represented as meeting, in consequence of his conduct, with a severe and even fatal fall, such as, by like acts of irreverence and inattention show that they have neither Christian faith nor spiritual taste, expose themselves to a far more dreadful evil than bodily sickness or temporal death: and, (4.) That St Paul, on this occasion, by the restoration of the youth to life, gave a fresh proof of his supernatural authority. In ver. 13—16. the sacred writer details certain of the apostle's subsequent proceedings; and from this part of the record, ministers and others may draw this practical and useful hint; that, in their operations, they should act by system, and should take care that neither the false lights of secular pleasure, nor even the attractions of affectionate and devoted friendship, seduce them from the fulfilment of a great and wisely-concerted plan of public usefulness. Ver. 17—35. record a remarkable discourse addressed by the apostle to the elders of the Ephesian church. In this discourse he does four things: (1.) He describes the manner in which, while resident in Asia Minor, he fulfilled the duties of his ministerial charge; specifying his humility, tears, and temptations; the union, in his ministry, of public and private instruction; the comprehensive, evangelical, practical, and monitory character of his discourse; and his freedom from covetousness, selfishness, and oppression, in his intercourse with the people. (2.) He announces the afflictions which he was now about to endure, and finely manifests the heroic dignity of his devoted soul by the memorable words, 'but none of these things move me,' &c. (3.) He charges the Ephesian elders to give diligent heed to the trust committed to their hands, as having not only their own souls, but the souls of others, to superintend with special care. (4.) He 'commends them to God and to his gracious word,' as adopted to the high and holy end of assisting them in the duties of time, and securing them an inheritance in heaven. In ver. 36—38. we have a record of the parting interview between the apostle and the elders; an interview saddened with tears, but, at the same time, sweetened by friendship, and sanctified by prayer.

PRAYER.

King eternal, immortal, and invisible, at the close of another day we bow before thine uplifted throne; and while we make mention of thy greatness, we would also celebrate the riches of thy grace. We thank thee that, although we

have so often forgotten thee, thou hast constantly remembered us, and that, notwithstanding our great unworthiness and sin, thou hast brought us in health, and peace, and safety, to the present hour. And we thank thee, also, that to the common bounties of thy providence, thou hast added so many great religious privileges, by the diligent and faithful use of which we may obtain those spiritual blessings which make provision for the immortal soul, and are as immortal as the soul itself. That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, that the gospel has reached our dwelling, that all scripture is given by thine own inspiration, and that prophets, apostles, and pious ministers, have shown us the way to heaven, we owe to thy great and undeserved goodness; and for these and all thy benefits we magnify thy name. O may we believe in Christ to the saving of our souls. May we receive the gospel, by faith, in all its consolatory and sanctifying principles. May thine inspired word prove profitable to us for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. And may thy ministers see the fruit of their labours in the spiritual improvement of our souls. Dispose us to humility, and to confess, when we have done all, that we are unprofitable servants. May we serve the Lord with all humility of mind, and seek for the pardon of the great and many sins which degrade and defile even our best performances in the riches of thy saving mercy, and the atonement of thine incarnate Son. Forgive the transgressions which we have committed against thee this day. Protect us this night from evil, and raise us up, if such be thy holy will, to the light, and duties, and enjoyments of another day. Regard in mercy our relatives and friends. According to their ages, their characters, their circumstances, and their wants, let the communication of thy mercy be. Be gracious to the sick and the sorrowful. Lead them to thyself as the God of all comfort, and grant that the winds and storms of this troubled life, may make them cling the closer to the Saviour's breast. Bless the whole family of living men. Let thy way be known on the earth, thy saving health among all nations. Answer us, we pray thee, Father of mercies, in these our unworthy petitions, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXXXI.

REMARKS.

This psalm appears, from ver. 3, to have been intended for the feast of trumpets, that divinely appointed festival, in regard to which it is said, (Deut. xxix. 1,) 'In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work; it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you.' But besides teaching us, as an example, the propriety of adapting our devotional services to the peculiarity of the occasion on which they may be performed, and furnishing us with a model of appropriate correspondence between the season and the psalmody, it explicitly unfolds most important and monitory truth. Although, in the simplicity of our Christian worship, the timbrel, psaltery, and harp may not pour their tide of mingling music on our ear, and although no feast of trumpets summon us to celebrate, with their majestic voice, the praises of our God, yet the three first verses of the psalm may serve as themselves a trumpet-call to gratitude and song. We have 'our solemn feast-day,'—the day so peaceful and so precious, which, every week, breaks in on the cold monotony of life,—that sabbath of sabbaths, most of all, when believers meet around the emblems of the sacrifice. Let the day of sacramental fellowship—let every sabbath as it comes—be indeed a day of hearty Eucharist. For every sabbath brings along with it the lesson—and why should it not be learned even on life's common days?—that Jehovah is 'our strength,' and of believing souls the fortress and the shield. In ver. 4, 5, the call contained in the previous portion of the psalm is enforced by a consideration which, by a truly religious mind, will, of course, be felt as paramount—the institution and command of God. Even so, communion, sabbath, psalmody, let us regard as each 'a statute,' 'a law,' 'a testimony,' and in the authority by which they are ordained, and the purpose for which they are prescribed, let us find the motives for observing them which bear most closely on our conscience and our hearts. Ver. 5—7, contain a brief record of the circumstances in which the feast of trumpets was ordained; circumstances which it was probably one great object of the feast to celebrate. And O what a mass of moral argument—what a majestic plea for holiness, adapted not to Israel only but to man—is imbedded in these few and simple words, 'I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.' The address contained in these three verses may be regarded as a summary of the laws and promises of the Sinaitic covenant, and as forming part of the historical sketch, commencing at the fourth verse. The abruptness with which, according to this view, it is introduced, may be accounted for by the freedom allowed in this respect to poetry, and by the fact that the statements of ver. 7, may be regarded as virtually identifying the

time at which it was delivered, and introducing the address itself. That it is introduced historically is indicated by the two verses which immediately succeed: 'But my people would not hearken to my voice,' &c. But it is not merely as casting light on the context that these awful words are important. What a manifestation do they give of human sin—representing, as they do, a nation eminently favoured with the revelation of God's character and the experience of his goodness, utterly rejecting both his doctrine and himself! And what a manifestation do they also give of divine judgment,—representing the Almighty, as they do, giving up his chosen 'to their own hearts' lusts;' leaving them to walk in the foolish and fatal counsels of their own erring and alienated minds. In ver. 13—16, with which the psalm concludes, God expresses regret, as it were, at the failure of Israel to hearken to his voice, and vividly describes the blessings which would otherwise have been heaped upon their heads. Let us be well assured that not more truly were Israel losers by rejecting God, than we shall be by rejecting him whose mediation has provided for the soul 'the finest of the wheat,' and who, in terms remarkably similar to those applied in ver. 13, by God to Israel, exclaimed, in reference to doomed Jerusalem, 'If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!'

PRAYER.

Almighty and most merciful Lord God, give us grace to approach thee now and at all times with holy reverence, and yet with filial confidence and love. We acknowledge thee as our strength, and thank thee that while, by reason of our numerous and aggravated sins, thou mightest have employed thy resistless power to destroy us, thou hast preserved us in the midst of all the dangers to which we have been exposed, and brought us in peace and safety to the beginning of another week. For all thy long-continued kindness towards us, make us sincerely and devoutly thankful; and O convince us that we have especial cause to praise thee for the blessings of the Christian salvation. Dispose us this day, both in thy public courts, and in our private dwelling, to celebrate the riches of thy saving grace. And grant, O God, that we may not only praise thee for the spiritual and eternal blessings of the gospel, but also lay hold of them for our own souls. Convince us of their value, by giving us the personal experience of their suitability to our own condition. Remove our shoulder from the burden which sin and satan have imposed. Raise us from the degradation and deilement of our natural estate. Dispose us to bear the yoke of Jesus, and grant that we may find it easy. May we rejoice to serve thee, and in keeping thy precepts may we find a great reward. May we delight to hear thy voice and to do thy will, whether thou speakest to us from the

secret place of thunder, or from the peaceful heights of Zion. May we yield our minds to the doctrines of thy holy gospel, and be stirred to gratitude by the faith of its blessed truths. May we diligently keep thy holy commandments. Enable us to engage this day with holy ardour in the public and private duties of the sabbath. Assist thy ministers, and help us, and our fellow worshippers, to serve thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. Feed us with the finest of the wheat and with honey from the rock. Bless thy church, whether at home or abroad. May the sabbath be a joyful day in all her dwellings, and may those to whom as yet it brings no tidings of God, and Christ, and heaven, be visited with thine enlightening and regenerating grace. To these our imperfect prayers, grant, O Father of mercies, a favourable answer, through the merits of thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS LXXXII. LXXXIII.

REMARKS.

The former of these psalms relates to the duties and dangers of magistrates and rulers. In the first verse the solemn fact is stated that God is present in their assemblies, and both witnesses and judges their procedure. What a practical and powerful consideration for persons in authority and power! It should, and when properly believed and realized, it will both consecrate the counsels and determine the decisions of the magistrate and judge. O then, although in respect of their delegated superiority and power, 'gods,' in figurative speech, be given them for their name, and although they are entitled to require the expressions of respect which their offices, if not their persons, claim, yet let them know that, as from God the offices proceed, so the officers themselves are under the inspection of his penetrating eye, and that, in common with the people whom they superintend, they must render an account. In accordance with this solemn principle, well might Jehovah ask, as he does in the second verse, 'How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked?' For O how utterly discordant was such a perversion of justice, and patronage of crime, both with the authoritative law and with the moral character of God; and how entirely repugnant to the first principles of social government, and the very object for which the judicial and magisterial functions were ordained! In ver. 3, 4, unerring wisdom directs the official men described to a better course; inculcating, in that spirit of tenderness towards the poor, the fatherless, and the afflicted, by which even the Mosaic law is characterized, the exercise of justice, clemency, and kindness, towards these three classes of the people.

Not, however, to magistrates alone, but to others also, whether rich and prosperous, or, like the very objects of their compassion, desolate and poor, do such persons, by their circumstances, tenderly appeal for kindly sympathy and benevolent assistance. Piously and judiciously to 'deliver the poor that cry, the fatherless also, and him that hath no helper,' is a fine and Christian-like employment; and 'pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourself unspotted from the world.' But the official persons here described, are represented in ver. 5, as at once ignorant, foolish, and obstinately wrong, in regard to the duties of their office, inasmuch that 'all the foundations of the land were out of course,' that is, the whole social fabric tottered—the national economy was altogether disjointed and confused. With what power, for evil or for good, are judges, magistrates, and governments invested! How noble, how useful to go right! how base, how fatal to go wrong! And O how much do they need a mightier strength, and a purer wisdom, than their own! In ver. 5, 7, Jehovah declares that, although he had said of these rulers they were 'gods,' referring, probably, to the first verse, and also to Exodus xxii. 25, where it is said, in reference to magistrates, 'thou shalt not curse the gods,'—they nevertheless should 'die like men,' that is, like persons possessed of no such rank and dignity, 'and fall like one of the princes,' that is, like one of the heathen chiefs; a statement which may be regarded either specifically, as a threatening of speedy and terrible destruction, as a punishment for their disobedience and crimes, or generally as an intimation of the familiar, but neglected fact, that death consigns to a common resting place the rulers and the ruled. The psalm concludes, in ver. 8, with these remarkable expressions: 'Arise, O God, judge the earth, for thou shalt inherit all nations;' a prayer and prediction admirably appropriated to the circumstances so vividly described in the previous portion of the psalm, and fitted both to confirm the anticipations, and to animate the efforts, of Christ's holy church, in reference to the predicted time when 'the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ,' when Messiah shall 'inherit all nations.'

The eighty-third Psalm, the last of those characterized as Psalms of Asaph, was probably written on occasion of the invasion of Judah by the Ammonites and Moabites, in the time of Jehoshaphat, as recorded 2 Chron. xxi. In the first verse an appeal is made to the Almighty for assistance and defence; and in the five following verses, the circumstances are recorded which called for the special interposition of his hand. More especially the psalmist states in regard to this attempt against the people: 1. That there was a confederation of sins, comprehending, hatred of God, hostility to his chosen, pride, cruelty, and craft; and, 2. That there was a confederation of sinners, comprehending a great variety of tribes, and including more than one of whom better things might have been expected. This vivid picture of the confederate enemies of Judah is very similar to that which the New Testament and uninspired, though authentic history, presents of the combination

of Jews and Gentiles, of monarchs, judges, magistrates, philosophers, and people, against the faith and followers of Christ. They virtually said of Christians, 'Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that their name may be no more in remembrance.' But thanks be to the Friend of truth, the almighty Champion of our faith! their aim has been defeated, their enterprise has failed. And as in ver. 9—18, the result of the efforts of Judah's enemies is vividly portrayed, so the annals of the past and the divine predictions of the future, testify that the Saviour's enemies must either 'seek God's name,' ver. 16, 'or be confounded and troubled for ever,' ver. 17. Alas, alas! that any of us by unbelief and sin should subject ourselves to the awful condition of being 'wheels' hurrying on to hell, (ver. 13,) of being fuel for the scorching and desolating 'flame,' ver. 14.

PRAYER.

Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, on the evening of thy holy sabbath, we give thee thanks for the great and many blessings which, in the course of it, we have received from thee. Even for the common bounties of thy providence we praise thee, acknowledging that we are less than the least of all thy mercies, and that it is because thy compassions fail not that we are not consumed. But more especially we praise thee for the provision which thou hast made by Jesus Christ, for the spiritual and everlasting welfare of our souls. Blessed be thy name that we have this day had an opportunity of enlarging and deepening our acquaintance with the method of salvation, and of participating in the glorious benefits which it reveals. O follow with thy blessing the sacred services in which we have been engaged. From this time forward may we live more like the children of God and the disciples of Jesus Christ. May we walk by the faith of the Son of God. May we live in the practice of all the virtues of the Christian character, and may the peace of God keep our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. In the various relations of life in which we may stand, may we adorn thy doctrine. And at the last, in thine own time and in thine own way, may we exchange a course of usefulness on earth for a glorious immortality in heaven. Bless the services of this day, not to ourselves only, but to others also. O may many who rose this morning impenitent and unbelieving, retire to rest this night in favour with thee and in peace with all; and may those who have this day heard thy holy word, be enabled to carry its lessons into practical application to their future lives. Bless our sovereign and our father-land. May thy servant, exalted to so high and responsible a charge, be guided by thy counsel, and protected by thy power. May piety and wisdom regulate the deliberations and decisions of

the privy council and the parliament. May our magistrates and judges habitually act as under thine omniscient eye. May our rich men be liberal, and our poor contented. Train the young to useful knowledge—train them to Christian faith—train them to everlasting life. And grant that all classes of the community may fear God, believe in Jesus Christ, and be subject to principalities and powers, not only for wrath but also for conscience' sake. Visit the afflicted with thy sanctifying and consoling mercy, and dispose us to regard their case with Christian sympathy. Send thy gospel forth throughout the world, and stir up thy church to contribute more liberally, to pray more fervently, and to labour more zealously, for the extension of thy kingdom and the triumph of thy cause. Arise, O God: inherit all nations. Defend us this night from danger; pardon our sins; and hear us in these our unworthy prayers, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord, who has taught us thus to address thee: Our Father, &c. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CII. 13. (*2d Version.*)

SCRIPTURE—EZRA V.—HAGGAI I.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Haggai and Zechariah were the first prophets sent to the Jews, after their return from Babylon to their own land. They were commissioned to exhort and encourage their brethren to proceed with the building of the temple, which had then been interrupted fourteen years. In the second year of his reign, Cyrus revoked the edict which he had issued, empowering the Jews to rebuild their city and temple on their return to their own land. To this measure he appears to have been instigated by the influence of the enemies of the Jews who resided at Samaria. The prohibition was continued by Cambyzes, who was the next king. After his death, however, Darius, the son of Hystaspes, succeeding, he permitted the building of the temple to proceed. The messages of the prophets mentioned are directed to Zerubbabel the civil governor, and to Joshua the ecclesiastical governor, both of whom exercised their authority by the permission of the Persian monarch. Our attention is here particularly directed to the prophecy of Haggai. The Jews, it appears, satisfied themselves with having built an altar on which to offer the customary sacrifices prescribed by their law. The prophet thus remonstrates with them, and inquires how they could suppose it to be consistent with their duty to God, to employ their time in building comfortable houses to themselves, and yet allow his temple to remain in an unfinished state. He warns them that, should they not provide for the worshipping of God according to his command-

ment, he would not bless them in the labour of their hands. He urges them to commence anew those operations which were required for the advancement of the building. In the second year of their return they had indeed made some progress in the work, by procuring materials and workmen, but their labours had been so long suspended as to be nearly lost. It appears that at this period the land was visited with a famine. A great drought prevailed, and men and cattle were suffering much from scarcity. The prophet intimates that these calamities had come upon them because of their neglect of God, and that to escape from them they were required to return to their duty in building the temple. The remonstrances and exhortations thus addressed, produced the desired effect. The rulers, with the people, were stirred up to engage vigorously in the work. But while thus proceeding, an attempt, as narrated, was again made to interrupt them. The matter is referred to Darius for decision.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

In the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon to Jerusalem, with authority to rebuild their temple, we have a striking instance of the truth and faithfulness of God. He thus testifies, that though he would punish his chosen people on account of their disobedience, he would not utterly forsake them, and that though he gave them over to the power of their enemies for a time, he would not leave them in their hands. When the time which he had set for their deliverance arrives, he is at no loss for instruments to carry his purposes of mercy into effect. He turns the hearts of their enemies, so as to render them ready for the work. The people of God, while they continue in this world, must lay their account to meet with opposition from his enemies. The more diligent they are to serve him according to his appointment, the more will wicked men be stirred up to frustrate their designs. With these also the corruption remaining in the heart of the believer is in accordance, so that the commands of God are apt to be neglected from a desire to promote self-indulgence. How merciful is it in God not to leave his professing people in this situation, but to bring the threatenings of his word and the chastisements of his providence to bear upon them, so as to rouse them to a sense of their sin and danger! He can easily overrule the designs of their enemies to subserve his wise and merciful purposes. It is thus said of him, 'that he maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder he restrains.' The believer, in his progress through this world, may frequently be surrounded with difficulties and dangers; he may walk in darkness, and see no light; the dispensations of divine providence may seem to be against him; still, however, it is his duty to hold on his way according to the teaching of God's word. This is to be his guide and directory; and if not in the progress of his journey through this world, yet assuredly in the end, he will have reason to be satisfied that God has ordered every thing in his lot wisely and well. The believer is not afraid to challenge investigation into the correctness of his conduct. For the purity of his motives he can appeal to a heart-searching God for the strictest scrutiny.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we bless thee for another opportunity of coming into thy presence, that we may pour out our hearts before thee. We thank thee for thy kindness in bringing us through the past night, and for permitting us to see the light of a new day. We acknowledge that it is of thy mercies that we are in the land of the living and in the place of salvation. Thou mightest justly have cut us off as cumberers of the ground. We acknowledge our great unworthiness. Our iniquities have been many and great, and thou mightest have made us monuments of thine everlasting displeasure at sin. But ever blessed be thy name, that when we deserved wrath thou didst remember and visit us in mercy. Thou hast spoken unto us by thy Son from heaven, with a voice of love. We rejoice that his message of peace and reconciliation has been addressed even unto us. Forbid, O God, that we should ever despise the riches of thy grace. Thou hast testified in thy dealings with thine ancient people how sin subjects to thy displeasure; how it causes thee to stretch forth thine arm in punishment; that though for their disobedience to thee thou wast pleased to carry them captives from their own land, yet thine anger did not continue against them for ever. When the time which thou hadst set in thy purposes of mercy, and which thou hadst declared by thy prophets, was come, thou wast graciously pleased to bring them back to their own land, that they might again rear thy temple which had been destroyed, and serve thee in the ordinances which thou hadst appointed for their observance. Heavenly Father, enable us to receive instruction from their example. Help us diligently to improve the means of grace and the ordinances of religion with which thou hast so abundantly favoured us—to read thy holy word, to sanctify our Sabbaths, and to wait upon thee in thy house of prayer. O forbid, that, by our abuse of the means of grace, we should ever provoke thee to withdraw our candlestick out of its place. But may we be ever careful to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ; so that hereafter we may have an abundant entrance into his everlasting kingdom. Confirm, O Lord, we beseech thee, every good and holy impression which may yesterday have been made on our hearts; whether in waiting upon thee in secret, or in private, or in public. Graciously be with us this day. Enable us habitually to realize thy presence, and to walk as seeing thee who art invisible. In every difficulty do thou guide us by thine unerring wisdom;

under every temptation, do thou uphold and strengthen us by thine almighty power. Mercifully be with all whom we ought more especially to remember before thee. Bless our fellow-men every where, with all temporal, but especially with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. Extend, we beseech thee, the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour until it fill the whole earth, so that all nations may see the salvation of our God. Hear our prayers, and accept of us graciously, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LVI.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XXI.

REMARKS.

It is delightful to witness the expression of the same principles in Christians, however differently situated. The love of Christ shed abroad in their hearts leads them to participate in each other's joys and sorrows. Their bond of union to Christ binds them to each other. The more abundantly they receive of the riches of Christ, the more desirous they are of promoting each other's welfare. Instead of being selfishly inclined, their breasts glow with social kindness to their fellow-creatures, but especially to their brethren in Christ. In this manner they obey his command and imitate his example. The path in which the Christian is led by the principles of his faith, is often surrounded with difficulties; and were he to be guided by considerations of personal safety, or by the advice of affectionate friends, he would not enter on the field of danger. No servant of Christ, however, is at liberty to consult his own ease when his Master requires his service. Whosoever, says Christ, loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. His love to his people leads them to suffer all things for his sake. It is to them a source of great encouragement, that whatever trials befall them, they are never separated from their Redeemer. They rely on his promise to be present with them, even when the furnace of affliction is hottest; that he will make his grace to be sufficient for them. The most eminent believers have, in this world, given evidence of their remaining weakness and imperfection. While here, indeed, they are never free from the corrupting influence of sin, and have still occasion to watch over themselves with godly jealousy, lest other principles than those which are implanted by the Spirit of God, should influence their conduct. Truly may it be said, that the fear of man bringeth a snare! In all circumstances, even in those of the greatest emergency, it becomes Christians, honestly and unflinchingly, to maintain the principles of the gospel, and never to seek for any temporary advantage, by making a sacrifice of these. By following a different line of conduct, how frequently have they fallen into those very troubles which it was their object to avoid. But though good men may have fallen, they are not to despair. They are encouraged

to hope in God, that he will yet raise them again. Those who act according to his word, have no reason to be afraid of their fellow-men, however great their rage or power. For greater is he that is for them than all who can be against them.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we desire to come into thy presence with reverence and humility. Thou art infinitely exalted above our highest conceptions. Heaven is thy throne, and the earth is thy footstool. Thou art present every where throughout the universe, beholding the evil and the good. But we rejoice that, though thou be highly exalted, thou hast graciously condescended to look down upon us, the fallen children of men, with an eye of compassion. Thou hast revealed thyself to us as a God of love. We rejoice in the assurance, that thou hast so loved the world, that thou hast given thine only Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Herein, indeed, is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Enable us, heavenly Father, now to approach thee through him, as our Mediator, and do thou love us freely and accept of us graciously. Lift on us, we beseech thee, the light of thy countenance, reconciled and gracious in him. May the love of Christ constrain us to live not unto ourselves. Enable us to carry it about with us, and habitually to manifest its operation in our lives. May our light so shine, that others, seeing our good works, may glorify thee our Father who art in heaven. O forbid, that we should at any time so forget or violate our obligations to our Redeemer, that the world should have any room to doubt or disbelieve our Christian character. But through good report or evil report, may we be the followers of Christ, 'accounting it but a small matter to be judged by men. We acknowledge, O Lord, that sin and imperfection cleaves to our best services, and that, wert thou to mark our iniquities against us, we could not answer thee for one of the many thousand transgressions with which we are chargeable. We come, beseeching thee, that wherever we have done iniquity, thou wouldst enable us by thy grace to do so no more. Let us never be satisfied with any present attainment, but may we be pressing forward to the mark set before us in the gospel, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy of our salvation, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God. Being led by his Spirit, animated by his promises, and rejoicing in the prospects of blessedness, which he has set before us, may we be enabled

to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. We thank thee, O Lord, for thy kindness to us through this day. Though we have often been unmindful of thee, thou hast never been unmindful of us, to bless us and to do us good. Thou hast watched over us amidst many dangers. Thou hast upheld us amidst much weakness. We beseech thee to be mercifully with us through this night. Keep us in thy fear. Surround us with thy favour as with a shield, so that no evil may come nigh unto us. When we awake may we be still with thee. Be graciously present with our fellow-men everywhere, but especially with those in affliction. Be unto them a God of grace and consolation. Spare lives that are useful, and prepare the dying for death, for judgment, and for eternity. May the Sun of righteousness arise and shine yet more and more, so that his light may cover the whole earth, and all nations see the salvation of our God. Hear, Father in heaven, these our humble supplications, and do unto us beyond what we are able to ask, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXVI.

SCRIPTURE—HAGGAI II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The prophecy delivered by Haggai had been eminently successful in stirring up the rulers with the people to proceed with the building of the temple. From the period when it had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, about sixty-eight years had elapsed, and some of the Jews were still alive who had seen it standing, previous to their captivity in Babylon. These, it appeared, had observed that the temple, now in building, was greatly inferior, in external grandeur, to that which had been destroyed, and the remarks which they made had a most discouraging effect on the persons engaged on the work. To prevent this, Haggai is sent to them with special messages for their working and encouragement. In particular Zerubbabel is informed that the Lord would cause great revolutions in the state of the church and of the world; that he would overturn and destroy existing monarchies and nations: but himself, the Lord declares, he would keep safe as his signet; him he would continue to rule over his people; to preserve them in peace and safety; that he had made choice of him for this very purpose. This we are to consider as a gracious intimation, that amidst all the convulsions and destruction of the neighbouring states, the Lord would preserve the people of Judah, with their rulers. It may be also considered as referring to him of whom Zerubbabel was a type, and predicting the establishment and continuance of the kingdom of Christ. By

a union with him his people are stamped with his image, and distinguished from all others as the people of God. God thus testifies that he would be mindful of the covenant which he had made with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, that in their seed all nations of the earth would be blessed.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

It is a token for good, in the case of any when the warnings and remonstrances of God's servants have had their desired effect; when, instead of exciting resentment, they give rise to a disposition to perform the duties enjoined. It is unwarrantable to throw discouragements in the way of any, when proceeding according to the divine word, though not making so specious an appearance as many others. Let us remember that it is to this man God will look with favour, who is of an humble and contrite spirit, and who trembles at his word. We often, indeed, judge very erroneously in matters of religion. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Instruments which have been long despised and neglected by men, have often been signally honoured and crowned with success by God. Whatever may be the opinion of our fellow-men, if we are satisfied that we are proceeding according to the will of God, it becomes us to proceed in the exercise of faith and hope, not doubting but all our labours shall meet with an abundant blessing. However much nations, with their kings and rulers, may be set in opposition to the Lord, it is our happiness to know that his power is omnipotent. He has the hearts of all men in his hands, and can turn them to fulfil his purposes, whether of mercy or of judgment, as the rivers of water. He can fill every soul with desires to him who was long promised as a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel. All the treasures of the earth are his, and he can appropriate them to such measures as he will bless for extending the kingdom of Christ, until it fill the whole earth. It becomes us frequently to reflect on the happiness of having our lot cast under the gospel dispensation, when the Desire of all nations is come, in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth. He is the corner-stone on whom believers are built up as living stones, and are temples of the Holy Ghost. In this manner, they are fitted for the spiritual service of God on earth, and for his glory in heaven. We ought diligently to guard against supposing that we are serving God with acceptance, while we are living in the neglect of commanded duty, and are following our own inclinations. God requires that we keep his commandments with our whole hearts, and that we study to yield him not a partial, but a universal, obedience. Those who thus truly and faithfully study to serve God, may look undismayed on all the convulsions and changes of the world, being assured that the gracious purposes of God to his people stand unchanged, and that he is arranging every circumstance to the bringing in of that happy period when he will give to his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession; when the Jews shall believe on him whom they have long rejected; when both shall acknowledge Jesus as their Shepherd, and

equally experience his omnipotent protection and unbounded love. The Lord will abundantly bless his own people. He has chosen them to manifest his glory, and to enjoy him for ever.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hast immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see. Thou art surrounded with myriads of angels and glorified spirits, who cease not, day nor night, to celebrate thy glory. Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb that was slain, they ascribe glory, and honour, and dominion, and power, for ever and ever. We rejoice, O Lord, that unto us, the sinful children of men, upon the footstool of this earth, thou permittest to unite with them in celebrating thy glory. We rejoice to know that Jesus is seated at thy right hand, as a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and that we are encouraged and invited to draw near unto thy throne in full assurance of faith in his blood. Help us, O God, now to approach thee through him, as our Mediator, with hope and confidence in thy favour, as children to a father. When we draw near unto thee, do thou enlarge the desires of our hearts. Do thou impress us more and more deeply with the sense of our wants and necessities, and of the fullness and blessings which thou hast treasured up in Christ, and which thou hast promised to communicate abundantly to the heirs of salvation. Forbid, O Lord, that we should be straitened in ourselves, when we are not straitened in thee. Enable us to come hungry and thirsty into thy presence, and do thou supply us abundantly with the bread and water of life. We rejoice that thou hast never at any time left thyself without a witness to thy church, and thou art a God who keepest covenant and delightest in mercy. Though thine ancient people departed from thy commandments, thou wast not willing that they should remain at a distance from thee, and perish in their sins. Thou wast mindful of thy covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that in their seed all nations of the earth should be blessed. When their posterity had sinned, and thou hadst brought them to a sense of their sin, thou wast graciously pleased to return unto them and speak unto them in kindness and mercy. We rejoice in all the gracious promises which thou hast made to thy people in former ages, that though thou didst predict the revolution of nations and kingdoms, yet thou didst promise that the Desire of all nations should come, who would make the glory of thy latter house to be greater than of the former, notwith-

standing all its external magnificence. And we rejoice to know that the promise which thou didst make has been fulfilled, in the coming of Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, into our world in the likeness of sinful flesh. We desire now to rejoice before thee in all that he has done and suffered, or is now doing, at thy right hand as our Mediator. May we have redemption through his blood. May our hearts be purified by faith in him. May his Spirit dwell richly within us, and enable us to bring forth in our lives the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto life eternal. Go with us to the duties of this day. May thy love be in our hearts, and do thou strengthen us inwardly with thy might. O help us, heavenly Father, to spend this day as not knowing but it may be our last in this world. Accept of our united thanksgivings, for all thy kindness to us hitherto, and enable us ever to live as the children of thy mercies; and all that we ask is for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LIV.

SCRIPTURE—Acts xxii.

REMARKS.

The conversion of Paul, as here narrated by himself, is one of the most remarkable on record. No man could be more under the influence of Jewish prejudice than he was. His antipathy to the Christian religion carried him to the greatest extremities. No sufferings he considered to be too great for those who had embraced it. In subjecting them to scourging, imprisonment, and death, he considered that he was doing God service, and in this line of conduct he proceeded with fiery zeal. But how mysterious are often the ways of divine providence in dealing with his chosen people. In the sovereignty of his grace, Jesus arrests the persecuting pharisee in his mad career, and gives him a new heart, subdues all his enmity to him, and commissions him to preach his gospel. Paul is henceforth to be a powerful instrument in the building up of the Christian church, which formerly he had exerted himself to destroy. The facts narrated by Paul were well known to many who did not believe in Jesus, and could not be disputed. Motives of a worldly nature could not have actuated him in embracing the Christian faith. For the associates whom he had left had all worldly preferments in their power, and those to whom he had joined himself, had nothing to bestow. In joining with them, indeed, he could anticipate nothing but a life of suffering. In the communications which he states to have been made to him by Jesus, he could not have been mistaken. They are repeated again and again, and in different places, in the company of others, as well as by himself. They are con-

trary to all his former prepossessions. The service to which Jesus commissions him, was no doubt arduous, but he endows him with those qualifications which fitted him for its performance. Paul receives those directions and supports which the necessities of his case required. The course on which he had entered was not his own choice. He had been specially appointed to it by his Lord; and to the same authority it becomes every believer to feel himself at all times subject. The example of Paul, here set before us, teaches that we may lawfully plead our civil privileges to screen ourselves from oppressive and cruel treatment; and that from men, destitute of the knowledge of true religion, we may receive a more equitable treatment than from those whose views of divine truth are perverted.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we worship thee as a being possessed of every possible excellence. Thine existence is eternal, and thine essence is immense. Thy holiness is unspotted, and thy justice is inflexible. Thy mercy is infinite, and we rejoice in the assurance, that thou delightest in its exercise to the fallen children of men. We would therefore now take encouragement to approach thee. We acknowledge that, in ourselves, we have no claim to thy friendship, for we have sinned against thee times and ways without number. Which of thy commandments have we not broken? Which of thy laws have we not violated in the imaginations of our hearts, in our words, and in our actions? Thou mightest justly have left us to suffer the punishments threatened against the transgressors of thy law. But we rejoice that thou hast revealed thyself unto us in Christ Jesus, reconciling a guilty world unto thyself, and not imputing unto sinners their trespasses. We desire, O Lord, now to draw near unto thee through faith in his blood. We come not in our own name, and we plead not our own righteousness for acceptance. But we come in the name of thy beloved Son, and we plead his righteousness, and his only. We come beseeching thee to be merciful for what he has done and suffered, and what he is now doing at thy right hand. For his sake, we beseech thee, to blot all our iniquities out of the book of thy remembrance, and love us freely and accept of us graciously. Lift on us the light of thy countenance, and visit us abundantly with the blessings of thy salvation. We would now take encouragement to approach thee on account of the many manifestations of grace which thou hast made to thy church in former ages. We would especially give thee thanks for thy gracious dealings to thy servant who was commissioned to preach thy gospel to the Gentiles. We rejoice in the testimony which thou didst enable him to give to

the sovereignty of thy love, in bringing him from darkness to light, and in changing him from being an instrument of cruelty to thy people, to be a chosen vessel for delivering many from Jewish unbelief and heathenish superstition, and enabling them to believe in Jesus Christ as their only Saviour. In the conversion of thy servant may we be led to reflect with admiring gratitude on the unbounded mercy of the Redeemer, who extends salvation even to the chief of sinners. May we thus be encouraged more and more to commit our souls unto him, being assured, that however numerous and heinous our transgressions, the love of our Redeemer is infinite, and that his blood cleanses from all sin. Enable us now to commit our souls afresh into his hands, as unto a faithful Creator, being assured that he will keep that which we have committed unto him against that day when he will present us faultless in the presence of his Father, with unspeakable joy. We thank thee, O Lord, for thy merciful preservation through this day. By thy good hand we have been supported amidst all our unprofitableness and unworthiness. We beseech thee to be merciful with us through this night. Be our guide even unto death, and when thou art pleased to remove us from this earth, may we be exalted to reign with our Redeemer in his kingdom above. These blessings which we ask for ourselves, we beseech thee to bestow on all our brethren of mankind. May our friends enjoy thy friendship; our enemies, if we have any, do thou forgive; our benefactors, do thou reward. Bless our native land in all its privileges, temporal and spiritual. Bless thy church which thou hast planted in it. Build up the walls of our Zion, and may they prosper who love her. May she yet be a joy and a praise in the whole earth. Dwell graciously in this corner of thy vineyard; may it be a well watered garden, in which thou delightest, and bringest forth abundantly the fruits of righteousness. Hear, O Lord, we beseech thee, these our humble supplications, and do unto us beyond what we are able to ask or think, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—EZRA VI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. The decree of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the temple, is found, as had been stated by the Jews, in Achmetha, or Ecbatana, the chief city

of Media, search for it having been made by order of Darius, first in Babylon, without success. Ver. 2—5. The provisions of the decree are indeed most ample, referring to the strength of the foundations of the temple, its magnitude, (though, in this respect, it would seem it was at last built like the former,) the nature of the structure, the funds, furnished from the royal purse, and the restoration of those vessels that were yet wonderfully spared (2 Kings xxiv. 13.), so precious in the eyes of this patriotic people. Ver. 6—12. No obstruction is now permitted to the rebuilding of the temple; or, rather, orders are given for carrying into operation the provisions of the decree in all respects. A regard to the memory of Cyrus would have some influence in determining the mind of Darius thus to fulfil his intentions; but also, it would appear, from expressions in the proclamation respecting prayers for the royal family, ver. 10, and the divine vengeance on future nations who might hereafter injure or destroy the work now to proceed again, ver. 12, that he had been made acquainted with the nature and value of the true religion, though the conviction was neither deep nor permanent. Ver. 13—15. Thus protected and supported by the king, and encouraged, also, to the undertaking by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah,—as see their writings at large,—the Jews completed the temple about two years after the publication of the decree of Darius, honourable mention being made of the name of Artaxerxes in connection with the event, as well as that of Cyrus and Darius, who, at least, greatly improved and adorned it on coming to the throne. Ver. 16—22. Suitable rejoicings are held after an event of such overwhelming interest. The twelve tribes had been broken up into fragments during their exile, and could only occasionally and imperfectly observe their ritual as prescribed generally by Moses. It is now revived, however, in so far as it could be, after the manner of their fathers, in honour of the re-appearance among them of a structure around which so many fond associations were concentrated. Darius, the immediate instrument under providence of the successful issue, is alluded to as king of Assyria, because he reigned over that country, though, along with Babylon, it was now merged in the Persian monarchy.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The path of duty is to be taken by us, in every situation of life, at all times and under all circumstances. Often, in offices of trust, temptations exist to divert us from it; but, like Darius in the matter of the decree of Cyrus, who simply gave orders to seek for it, and waited the issue, we are to dismiss them, and act with perfect impartiality. God wonderfully overrules the thoughts of men's hearts, and the events of the world, for the promotion of his glory. A decree is made for the rebuilding of his temple by a heathen prince, and discovered at the moment its authority was so much needed. If, however, the temples we are required to rear, the objects to further, be agreeable to our conscientious convictions, how much more forward should we be in lending our influence, time, money, exertions, in the different stations of life in which we are placed! Works

which are brought to a successful issue, are usually attended with difficulty at the outset. Our way would be more direct and easier; but God's is circuitous and thorny, that we may value the result more. Mark his hand, and experience the richer blessing of improvement in character—the preparation for one of another kind. At the proper time relief appears, the winter of the soul departs, and the face of all things is changed. Though seriousness become us usually, in a condition like this, there are occasions on which the whole depths of the spirit should be stirred in exuberance of joy. Sadness is dishonouring to God if out of its proper place. It is meet, *at times*, that we should make merry, if in a Christian spirit, and within proper limits; and truly gladness to the full is demanded from us on the revival or recovery of religious advantages.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, we are ever prone to go astray. We are sinful creatures, having no plea to utter before thy throne but thy mercy; and wert thou not to direct and strengthen us, we should fall a pray to temptation, and depart from thy will. O do thou, therefore, at all times, be at our right hand, that we may walk before thee as thy obedient children. Help us, we beseech thee, according to our means and opportunities, to be serviceable in promoting the interests of thy Zion. Let these be revived in our day; and let a blessing descend on all, both at home and abroad, who have them at heart, and are engaged in advancing them. The residue of the Spirit is with thee, Almighty and most merciful God; and though discouragements attend us on every hand, we do not despair. In thine own time and way the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and we, thy servants, will praise thee for the greatness of thy power. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. We offer up to thee our thanksgivings that thou art still sparing and blessing us. We deserve not thy mercies. The recurrence of them, in the midst of our ingratitude, humbles us deeply. Deal not with thy servants in judgment, we entreat thee. As we separate for our duties this morning, may thy presence go with us, and let us be returned here in security from temptation and danger. Hear our prayers for those with whom we are united by the ties of relationship, or friendship, or gratitude, as we beseech thee to hear their prayers for us. Thou knowest our several necessities better than we do ourselves. Suit thy grace to all these. May thy peace reign in this dwelling. May it take up its abode in every heart. And may we, who are wont to meet here from day to day on earth, meet before thy throne in heaven, washed and sanctified by the blood of thy Son. Our prayers

are before thee, O Lord God. Hear them for the sake of Him whom thou hearest always. And to thee the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all praise ascribed for ever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRaise—Psalm cxxiv.

Scripture—Acts xxiii.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1. It was natural for Paul to examine, with some attention, who were the present members of the sanhedrim, having acted under them, while unconverted, in persecuting the Christians. Ver. 2—5. A protestation of his conscientiousness in adopting and persevering in the Christian faith, was also natural in the circumstances. But Ananias, the high priest, could not brook it, as it reflected on his own conduct and that of the members of the council; he descends, therefore, to a most unwarranted abuse of his office as a judge. Paul resents the unjust assault with some warmth, for which, with great magnanimity, he, on being appealed to, expresses contrition, forgetting personal insult in his respect for the power ordained by God, he, under the influence of excited feeling, not having adverted to the situation of Ananias. Ver. 6—9. A common object had, for the moment, mingled two opposite sects, the pharisees and sadducees, in array against him. While he compromises no truth, therefore, he weakens the party, by proving that the great doctrine for preaching which he had been called in question, was the very one on which the members of the council were at issue among themselves. The wisdom of such a line of procedure at once appears. The contending sects are thrown into dispute with each other, while the scribes espouse the cause of Paul, and declare him innocent; and allowing the possibility of an angel, or spirit of some deceased person, having spoken to him, avow opposition to the infidel sadducees. Ver. 10. The heathen Lysias discovers a stronger sense of justice than the Jew Ananias. Lest Paul should be sacrificed, amid the strife in self-protection he had wakened up, and thus, without a fair hearing, orders are given for him to be removed to a place of safety. Ver. 11. But a higher protector was with his servant than he who was but his instrument. The Lord makes consolation to abound as affliction abounded, and upholds him in his present extremity by assuring him, that he should be spared to testify the gospel of his grace at Rome, as he had done at Jerusalem. Ver. 12—35. Lysias' fidelity again contrasts favourably with the enemies of Paul. Some forty of them lay a base plot for his life; but the counsel of the Lord is stronger than that of men. Through a nephew of Paul, to whom it transpired, the intelligence of it is conveyed to himself, who again, sends it to the chief captain, who at once determines on transporting him to Cesarea, about seventy miles from Jerusalem. The whole matter is arranged in a manner highly creditable to him. The escort was

a sufficient protection; but that he might escape the rage of the Jews before morning, he departs about three hours after sunset. As he was unaccustomed to the fatigue of marching on foot, like the soldiers, relays of horses, or mules, are provided. A letter accompanies him to the governor, Felix, expressive of his reasons for sending him to Cesarea, and couched in terms honourable at once to his taste and his feelings. On arriving half way, or to Antipatris, and thus being fairly out of the reach of the Jews, the foot soldiers are sent back. Felix acts in the manner for which Lysias had prepared the way. The examination of his case is left over until a fair trial could be had; in the meantime he is deposited in a part of a palace built by Herod the Great, and not in the place in which prisoners in general were confined.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Christians, under the most favourable circumstances, are conscious of their deficiencies in the life they should spend, feel deeply humbled on account of them, and ascribe any attainments they make solely to the grace of God. Yet such a lowly opinion of themselves is perfectly compatible with a conviction of their integrity in their endeavours to act consistently with their obligations, and, if unjustly accused, they may appeal to their conduct in evidence, that with simplicity and godly sincerity they have had their conversation in the world. There is an anger of righteous indignation which is not sinful; if, however, in expressing this, we exceed the limits, as we are prone to do, we should evince our repentance. The office of those who rule over us demands respect, whatever be their personal qualities. God's ordinance gives value to it in our eyes. Men, in becoming Christians, do not lay aside ordinary prudence. All means of self-protection are open to them which sagacity may devise, provided no injury be done to truth. The servants of Christ experience most of his support when most sorely tried. The Lord is with them when others abandon them, as he was with Joseph and Paul. The under current of divine providence is continually working the stream of human affairs in the direction that benefits them, and glorifies God. Who is he that will harm them, if they be followers of that which is good? The best prepared schemes are defeated if other ends than those they contemplate are in the mind of the Almighty. The morality of unbelievers, found on the shore of this world like so many pieces of wreck, to indicate the fair fabric man once was, often puts to shame that of the professed followers of Christ. Virtue is to be admired in any form, although it grow in purity and perfection only from the root of faith. Society cannot afford to lose even the semblance of it.

PRAYER.

Ever blessed be thy name, Almighty Father, that we are permitted and encouraged, at all times, to draw nigh unto thee. Thou art glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, ever doing wonders; but thou art, nevertheless, our God and our friend, through thy Son. He is now at

thy right hand, having opened a way for us to thy throne, taking our petitions from us to present them to thee, and commending them with the interest of a personal experience of our wants. We are sinners, O thou Searcher of hearts. It is natural for us to sin; and every day that passes by but discloses to us how grievously and constantly we sin. We repair anew, therefore, to the fountain opened for uncleanness and guilt, which, we bless thee, is ever flowing. Wash thou us, and we shall be pure. Let our repose this evening be that of thy beloved, at peace with thee, with themselves, and with the world. Thy mercies, O Lord God, are new to us every morning and every evening, meeting us in a variety of forms, vouchsafed to us notwithstanding our ingratitude. O may a sense of them be deeply impressed on us. It is of thy grace, most compassionate Father, that any of us are made to differ from others; and we give thee the praise, if, in any measure, we live as thy servants. But inconsistency is continually discovered by us, and we need, therefore, habitually to look to thee for light to guide, and strength to uphold us. We desire to thank thee, that in the path of duty we may reckon upon thy watchful care; but may we never turn aside from it, and, in all respects, may we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, giving honour to whom honour is due, and cultivating whatsoever things are honest, and lovely, and of good report. May magistrates and rulers rule in thy fear. May we obey them for conscience sake. Prepare us, we beseech thee, for whatever thou hast prepared for us; and whether we awake in time or eternity, may we still be with thee. O Lord, hear, O Lord, forgive, hearken and do. Defer not, for thy name's sake, and answer these our prayers, not according to our imperfect desires, but according to the exceeding riches of thy glory, for the sake of thy Son our Saviour. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXVI.

SCRIPTURE—EZRA IX. x. 1—17.

REMARKS.

Yesterday morning we left the Jews exulting with joy, as became them, that they had again among them their temple, impeded though the work had been by the Samaritans and others. But we have occasion, at all times, to mingle trembling with our joy, for adversity is soon forgotten by us, and prosperity is often abused to carelessness and self-indulgence. Ezra, who had received a royal warrant to rectify the church and state of the Jews from the

king of Persia, found them, on his arrival, already participating largely in a vice strongly forbidden them, the prelude to idolatry, and under the consequences of which they and their fathers had grievously suffered, viz. marriage with heathen wives, the country being yet infected to a great degree by idolaters. Not only were the people guilty, but also the priests, whose regulations on this point were so particular, and the princes, who ought to have been forward to enforce subjection to the law. Evil communications, of any kind, corrupt good manners, especially of those whom we tenderly love, and into whose intercourse we are habitually thrown. In regard to the Jews, a marked line of distinction was necessary to be preserved between them and the heathens, separated, as they were, in principles and practice, by so wide a gulf. Though, however, all among us make a profession of religion, and the same care is not required, Christians should marry only in the Lord, watchful how they enter on a union where there is a difference of sentiment on a vital question, in the vain hope of being the instruments of conversion. The foundation of happiness in the married life lies, not merely in similarity of tastes, but, especially, in agreement on religion, and a common regard to its ordinances and its duties. Ezra, in the capacity of representative of the people, humbles himself before God, exhibiting the ordinary signs of sorrow and consternation customary among his people. And, as might have been expected, the spectacle of the exceeding depression of this man of God, awakened many who were personally guilty to a sense of their sins, so that others were speedily associated with him in deprecating the wrath of heaven, going up together for this purpose to the house of God, at the time the evening-sacrifice was offered. The prayer is touching in the extreme. Present iniquities are not viewed apart from those which had preceded them, that full conviction might be expressed. They were but additions swelling the mighty flood that had already been accumulating for a long period, or, according to another figure, putting another story on the proud Babel that defied the Almighty, as it towered up to the skies. But immediate mercies are not overlooked, that the crimson-colour of the defection, mourned over, may be completely revealed. God's kindness in influencing the hearts of the kings of Persia to release them from their bondage, and that they might rebuild their temple, and thus have 'a nail in the holy place' is made mention of. And warnings, too, are referred to, that the exceeding sinfulness of the people may appear. Even with respect to the Jews, language of this character may seem to some exaggerated, but it will be because they have not seen sin in the light which God views it. One of its effects is to blind us to its nature, and those will be most ready to join in it, not, it may be, who compared with others, are greater transgressors; but who, compared with the law of God and their obligations, are struck down with a sense of their defilement and their ingratitude. The prayer, in spirit, commends itself to every one who knows himself. But, it is not only by our prayers, but by our pains, that we approve ourselves acceptable servants. As evil had been committed and

mourned over, so the best convictive is to be applied. At the instance originally of Hezekiah, whose relatives, at least, were involved in the sin, the heathen wives are put away, as though the marriage was null, and the children, even, are separated who adhered to idolatry. Time was petitioned for, as it was required, that due distinction might be made between those wives who remained idolaters, or who might have been proselyted either after or before marriage. The particular crisis demanded a severe measure of this kind in the spirit, rather than according to the letter, of the law. Marriages with unbelievers are sinful, but are not now to be dissolved where contracted. And, in a country whose glory it is that the Christian religion is the basis of its laws, divorces are regulated by these. The general truth, however, is not to be overlooked, that we are to evince the sincerity of our condition, and our prayers, by repairing, in so far as we are able, the evils we have committed. How powerful the argument for early piety and purity, that from sin ceaselessly propagating itself, all that those who are converted, late in life, can do, is to mourn over the sins of youth, it being impossible for them at all to make amends for the injuries they have done by these sins.

PRAYER.

O our God, we are ashamed, and blush to lift up our faces to thee, O God; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespasses are grown up to the heavens. Since the days of our fathers, have we been in great trespasses unto this day, and for our iniquities hast thou been pleased to chastise us from time to time, as nations, and families, and individuals. And now, for a little space, art thou sparing us, remembering mercy in the midst of deserved wrath. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments which thou hast commanded us, requiring of us perfect obedience to thy laws, separation from the principles and practices of an evil world, a regard to thy glory in all we do, even the minutest actions of life. And after all that is come upon us, for our evil deeds, and for our great trespasses, seeing that thou, our God, hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast visited us with so much compassion, should we again break thy commandments, wouldest not thou be angry with us, that there should be no escaping? O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous, for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day; behold we are before thee in our trespasses. Pardon us, good Lord, we beseech thee, and impart to us thy Holy Spirit, that we may see clearly the path of duty, that we may be kept from falling, and live to thee. We have laid ourselves down, we have slept and awakened, for thou the Lord hast sustained us. Known

unto thee are the duties we have this day to perform, the trials we may be called to endure, the dangers and temptations to which we may be exposed. But we place ourselves in thy holy and safe keeping. The Lord is our light and our salvation, whom shall we fear? the Lord is the strength of our lives, who shall make us dismayed? Be with us in our going out and coming in. Let no evil come nigh our dwelling. Give to us a deeper insight into the deceitfulness of our hearts. Quicken us in the way of life. May Christ be increasingly precious to us, and may each day find us advancing in our course; that going on from strength to strength, every one of us may at length appear before the Lord in Zion. Bless all who are near and dear to us. Reward our benefactors. Have pity on our enemies, if we have any, and help us to forgive them. Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee. Succour the tempted. Comfort the afflicted. Pour into their wounded spirits the balm that is administered by a Saviour's hands, which, reaching the springs of sorrow, alone effectually removes it. Let thy way be known upon the earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee. Receive our thanksgivings, hear our prayers, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XVI. 8.

SCRIPTURE—Acts XXIV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—9. The trial of Paul, before the party to whom appeal is now made, is not long delayed. His accusers, from Jerusalem, are too eager to vent their indignation against him, especially for having been taken violently from them, to allow it to stand over for any time. They are speedily on the spot, and bring with them a famous orator, Tertullus, whom they had retained as counsel, the better to advance their cause in the eyes of Felix. His speech is distinguished both by flattery and falsehood, opening with an encomium on the government of Felix, notoriously untrue, and enlarging on the conduct of Paul in a manner which surprises us, that even his accusers, initiated as they were, could allow, much less confirm. Ver. 10—21. If the artifice of Tertullus were difficult of exposure, it would be found in the defence of Paul, made immediately on permission being given by Felix, and transparent with the qualities of becoming respect, truth, faithfulness, and conviction of innocence. One feature of it eminently arrests our notice,—the tenacity with which Paul holds by the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, his preach-

ing which had been his cardinal crime. As it struck at the root of infidelity, and by the justification it afforded of the claims of Christ, constituted the seal of heaven, confirming all the views that had been given of the design of his death, while it was at once a pledge of our own resurrection, and the introduction to the office he is now sustaining for the church, it might well be allowed to, as if it were the only doctrine of the Christian faith, obtain a sublime pre-eminence in the instructions of the apostle, and be stood by with the most unfaltering courage. Ver. 22, 23. Felix was evidently impressed by the appeal of Paul, supported as it was by information he possessed from other sources; and defers, therefore, giving judgment until Lysias should arrive, while he allows him greater liberty. Ver. 24—27. Under mixed motives of a regard to avarice and truth, he sends for Paul frequently in private. He expected the Christians, as they were distinguished for their generosity, would purchase his liberty, though in this he was disappointed, and so, on his successor arriving, as an effort to please the people he left him bound. On one occasion his mind was greatly shaken by an interview with Paul, nor are we surprised it should be, as the apostle's discourse was directed to points which had a special application to Felix, and the profligate Drusilla. The agitation, however, never went to the heart, and itself found relief in the well known words, the spirit of which has charmed many souls to perdition, 'Go thy way this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The zeal of enemies in a bad cause, may well put to shame the zeal of friends in a good one. The children of this world lose no time, and spare no pains, to promote their objects. Truth, however, is a beautiful thing, and, though it have often to make its way through passion and prejudice, there is an echo found to it in every breast, though it be frequently faint, and, faint as it is, is not admitted to exist. Clothed in the panoply of truth also, we are safe, for the course of divine providence runs in favour of the righteous. What a concentration of blessings is found in the doctrine of Christ's resurrection! It spreads as we meditate on it, and sends comfort in on the spirit, as from a variety of channels. It meets us at every turn in apostolical preaching. It should be the theme of the Christian, nor will its wonders ever be exhausted. Careful distinction should be made by us, between the effect of the manifestation of the truth to the conscience, under the influence of which many good resolutions are made, and deeds performed, and its effect on the heart, where it purifies and remains. It is surprising how very near people may be to the kingdom of God and never enter it. If in the constant use of the means of grace, or indeed, as the most superficial observers of events, affecting us and our families, we cannot fail often to have serious thoughts of judgment and eternity. And many esteem these as favourable symptoms, and, on the strength of them, are speeding their way, without alarm, to another world. But conversion is one thing, and conviction

another. The latter is accompanied with tormenting fear, plays on the surface of the spirit, would put off and depart. The convenient season never arrives, until too late, nor should we expect it to arrive, as the natural effect of delay is to weaken impression. In the meantime, it were well the convinced, though not converted, turned their attention to their real condition, morally speaking; for being convinced, they admit the necessity of a thorough change of character; but being unconvinced, they are wilfully ruining their souls. They are guilty of self-murder in a sense unspeakably more affecting than that in which the phrase is ordinarily used.

PRAYER.

God of the families of all the earth, we are again, this evening, through thy providential kindness, assembled around our family altar. Another day has passed by, bringing us so much nearer to death and eternity, and do thou forbid that any of us before thee should be putting off the concerns of our souls. Deepen and strengthen our convictions, we beseech thee. May we resolve, by thy grace, to follow up these, and, in this the day of our visitation, to seek reconciliation with thee. May we have always a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man. May we do no things, and go to no places, in which we would not like death to find us. Thus, as we repose for the night, may we anticipate that hour at which we shall sleep the sleep of death. We bless thee, O Lord God, that Christ hath risen indeed. May we rise with him to newness of life, and thus possess the pledge that, on laying aside the garments of mortality, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, this mortal, immortality. We would make confession of our sins in thy presence, holy Lord God. Sins against light, and warning, and mercies; sins that are numerous as the sands on the sea-shore. But though we are humbled, we are not discouraged on account of these. We have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous. His name we plead. On his sufferings and death we depend. May we be found of him, not having our own righteousness. Create in us clean hearts, O God. Renew right spirits within us. Make us altogether such as thou wouldest have us to be. We bless thee for the unspeakable gift of thy Son. We bless thee for food, and raiment, and protection. We bless thee for the reading of thy word. Impress its truths on our hearts. Grant that it may be circulated in all languages, and its privileges known among all nations. Revive thy work in the midst of us, O God. Let thy statutes be our song in this the house of our pilgrimage. Hear us when we call upon thee, for the sake of thy

Son, who, in condescension to our infirmities, hath taught us thus to pray, Our Father, &c.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CII. 13.

SCRIPTURE—NEHEMIAH I.

REMARKS.

The book of Nehemiah contains an interesting account of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, (which had been destroyed at the time of the Babylonish captivity,) and of a reformation, also, which Nehemiah accomplished amongst his countrymen. Attempts to rebuild the walls had been previously made by Ezra and others, but the people around the city contrived to hinder the work, and the honourable privilege was reserved for Nehemiah, of again making Jerusalem 'a praise in the earth.' This event was foretold in the remarkable prophecy of Daniel (ix. 25); where it is said—'Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, unto Messiah the prince, shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks. The streets shall be built again, and the wall in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks the Messiah shall be cut off.' Now these seven weeks first mentioned, each day meaning a year, are found in the time that elapsed between Ezra's commission from Cyrus to repair Jerusalem, and the death of Nehemiah. This time was just forty-nine years, and then 'the streets had been built again, and the wall in troublous times.'

The month Chisleu, answers to part of our November and December, and consists of thirty days. The twentieth year spoken of in the first verse, is the year of the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, in whose service Nehemiah was retained. 'Shushan the palace,' was the winter residence of the Persian sovereigns, from the time of Cyrus to that of Alexander the Great. Daniel lived, prophesied, and is supposed to have been buried there. The supposed site of Shushan, or Susa, presents now only a heap of ruins.

The Jews, in their long captivity, had always some signal proofs of God's care over them. Daniel, Nehemiah, and others, were exalted to posts of honour and confidence under the conquerors of their country. But they never forgot their desolate land, and the forsaken house of God, amidst all the splendour by which they were surrounded, and would have rather been door-keepers in the house of God, 'than dwell in tents of sin.' When Nehemiah heard of the miserable condition of Jerusalem he sat down and wept and mourned; but he did not despair while he remembered the promises of God, and knew that the throne of grace was accessible. Confessing the sins of himself and his people, he sought the King of kings before he had recourse to the earthly monarch whom he served; and it is a most important example which we have thus presented to us. In all our undertakings, let us ever first seek help and counsel from God. 'Cursed is the man that trusteth in

man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.' Yet how many are there who never ask his blessing, or pray for his guidance through the schemes in which they are daily employed! How often are even Christians chargeable with engaging in new undertakings, of business or pleasure, without referring all to God by prayer and supplication! How frequently do we 'make known our wants' to him, in some things only, and retain unlawful wants, among the 'all things' which we desire! And how often is human advice, and assistance, and influence, sought after as hidden treasure, while the wisdom which is from above is left unthought of!

Great is the privilege of 'offering up our desires to God,' through the mediation of our Saviour. Christ died that we might pray with hope. Christ rose that we might pray with confidence. Prayer is the channel through which the treasures of divine grace flow upon the soul. Great as is the privilege, great is our responsibility. Let us never lightly esteem the blessings of which we can so readily avail ourselves. Let us act in this matter in the spirit of the patriarch Jacob, when he said, 'I will not let thee go until thou bless me.' Let us act in the spirit of Joshua, when he said, 'whatsoever others do, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.' All the holy men of old were men of prayer. It is the life of duty. 'He that honoureth me, saith the Lord, I will honour, and he that despiseth me, shall be lightly esteemed.' The time is rapidly approaching when the throne of grace shall be the last and only refuge of our souls in the hour of death. Let it be our resort now, that we may find mercy to pardon, and grace to help in time of need.

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever blessed God, on the morning of another day enable us to draw near to thee with reverence and devout affection. Day unto day uttereth speech of thee. Night unto night showeth knowledge of thee. We close our eyes under thy protection; we open them to behold thy goodness. O let us never forget from whom it is that all our blessings flow; but may we recognize thy mercy and thy loving-kindness, in the food we eat, the air we breathe, and the raiment which clothes us; in the preservation of our faculties, and the continuance of our comforts; in the recurrence of every season, in the restored light of every morning; but above all, in the long-suffering mercy and grace to us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. We acknowledge our unworthiness of the least of thy mercies. O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant, and mercy for them that love him, and observe his commandments,—we, too, have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. We are offenders in thought, word, and deed. We are

transgressors by the omission of duty, and by the commission of sin. And there is no help in us. But we rejoice to know, that where sin abounded, grace much more abounds. We plead thine own promise, Whoso cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out! Lord, we come—we would return to thee. Pardon our sins. Cast us not away, for thy mercy's sake in Christ, in which we have trusted. Lord, we believe. Help thou our unbelief. We bless thee that thou hast never left thyself without a witness in the works of thy power, and the bounties of thy providence; but we bless thee with a deeper gratitude, that while, in times past, thou spakest unto our fathers by the prophets, thou hast in these latter days spoken unto us by thy Son from heaven. Enable us to grow daily in knowledge of thee, the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. May we esteem no knowledge equal to that of Christ crucified, to whomsoever it may be foolishness, and a stumbling-block. And may the wisdom which thy word teaches, produce fruit in our inward thoughts, and our outward actions; in the piety of our hearts, and the holiness of our lives, abundantly to thy praise and glory. And more especially be thou our guide and guardian through this new day, to which thou hast awakened us. Strengthen us for trial, if trial is before us. Deliver us from temptation, if temptation is on our way; direct us in difficulty, or shield us in danger; and if this day is to be crowned with thy mercies, O God, in our continued health, and hope, and peace, fill our hearts with gratitude; enable us to love thee more, and to serve thee better than we have ever done; and thus conducting us, from day to day, by thy counsel, receive all at last, we pray thee, to thy glory; and all we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 41.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XXV.

REMARKS.

The period in the life of Paul to which this chapter refers was a most momentous one. The time had now arrived when he was 'to bear the name of the true God before kings,' as had been foretold through Ananias of Damascus, after Saul's conversion. And nobly was this part of the great apostle's work begun. He had already caused the rapacious and licentious Felix to tremble before the word of God, and the terrors of a bad conscience. He was now to set the truth, as it is in Jesus, before Festus; a

more upright governor, but one too much engrossed, apparently, with his worldly affairs, to consider the things which belonged to his peace. He was to stagger the prejudices of the king of Judea; and in Cæsarea, the very city in which Agrippa's father, Herod, was eaten up of worms, he was to tell him of that great God's mercy, whose wrath his father had provoked; and finally, he was to be sent to Rome, the reeking furnace at that time of men's hottest passions, to proclaim the glorious gospel of salvation to sinful men.

This was the appointment of God with respect to his servant Paul, in order that the Gentiles might come to the knowledge of the truth, and men withstood it in vain. Jews bound themselves by a vow to kill him. The high priest and the chief of the Jews besought Festus to send for him to Jerusalem, that they might slay him by the way. Festus himself eventually seems to have partly yielded to their wishes. But the wisdom of the inspired apostle defeated their plans, and God watched over the safety of his messenger.

How striking is the contrast, in this chapter, between the honour which men receive of one another and that honour which cometh from God only. We find Paul here, a friendless prisoner, with no man to care or plead for him. We find Festus and Agrippa 'drest in their little brief authority,' and lording it in all the pride of rank and wealth. Yet Paul was a king and a priest unto God, the Lord of all, while they were 'scorned' by him who 'sits in the heaven.' Nay, it is just because there was such a friendless prisoner brought before them that their very names have attracted any attention from posterity. Let us not be guided only by external distinctions in our estimate of others. While we pay the becoming respect which is due to superiors, let us not forget, that the greatest saint may be found in the humblest rank; that God hath often chosen the weak things of this world to confound the things that are mighty, and that the greatest distinction man can rise to, is that of being a 'Son of God,' a joint 'heir with Christ!'

The conduct of Festus towards Paul appears to have been better, however, than that of Felix. When the Jews desired judgment against Paul, without evidence, he refused to deliver him to death, before his accusers were confronted with him. This equity may remind us, that in all our intercourse with others we never should prejudge the conduct of our neighbours, nor decide against them, but on clear grounds. A rash, uncharitable, and censorious spirit is too frequently indulged, often, indeed, by professing Christians; and even from the example of a heathen we may take a salutary lesson.

Yet it is a melancholy reflection, that Festus, Agrippa, and Berenice, were so near to the means of grace, without profiting by them. They were in influential stations, with the gospel of Christ in the hand of an apostle before them; but all that they saw was a singular case, and a singular man, in whose personal safety alone they felt some interest. Were his words ever blessed to their souls? God only knows. Such a result did not occur at the time. Let us always attend to the lessons which God, in

his providence, teaches. Let us ever be watchful to derive instruction from every quarter, however lowly or unpromising; and let us use the means of grace, in public or in private ordinances,—not as they who are curious, and ever asking after ‘some new thing,’ but as they who desire, with all saints, to comprehend the length, and breadth, and height, and depth, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.

PRAYER.

Thou art great, O God, and greatly to be praised. Who shall declare thy praises, or tell of all thy mighty works? Yet blessed be thy name, that though thou art so far removed from us, in holiness and majesty, thou art willing, as thou art able, to make all grace abound toward us. Thou hast preserved our lives throughout another day. Thou hast protected us, O God, amidst innumerable snares and dangers. Thou hast brought us together again in peace and security to the evening sacrifice of praise and prayer; and still the means of grace and the hopes of glory are vouchsafed us; still we are privileged to plead the merits and mediation of Christ, and to look forward to his second coming with humble joy in his salvation. But while we bless thee for undeserved mercies, we have also to acknowledge many sins. It is to thy restraining grace, O God, that we owe our preservation from fatal apostacy. The heart is deceitful above all things; who can know it? We desire to try ourselves, not by any standard of our own, but by thy most holy and heart-searching law. In many things we offend. In all things we fail and come short. If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand. Even in our best services, thy pure eye seeth the sin that worketh in us. But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared! Still, therefore, O God, do we hope in thee; still, therefore, do we rejoice that with thee there is mercy and plenteous redemption. And how shall we praise thee for him through whom redemption has been revealed to us; for him who died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God; for him who now, we trust, stands between our souls and our sins, as our advocate and mediator? O fill our heart with that love by which faith in Christ worketh. Make it more and more our delight to have recourse to that fountain of his peace-speaking blood, which thou hast opened for sin and for uncleanness. And while we daily adhere more closely to him as our Saviour, may we be also daily more and more conformed to his image. By holiness, by peacefulness, by charity, by every good work, may we declare, in the sight of men, that we would do

thy will on earth, even as it is done in heaven. Bless the ministers of thy glorious gospel. May they be animated by the Holy Spirit, even as thy saints of old. Bless especially those labourers, who, like Paul, are called to carry the message of grace to the nations who are in darkness. Remove obstacles from their way. Soften the heart of enemies. Make the truth strong for thine own name's sake, that the whole world may see the glory of our God. And while peace is in our own beloved Zion, and prosperity within her bulwarks, let us not forget that our responsibility is increased with our advantages. Let us not be high-minded, but fear, and use whatever talents thou hast committed to our keeping as those who must give account. Lord, watch over us this night. Grant us sound and refreshing sleep, and to see the light of a new day, if it pleaseth thee. Bless also our friends. Reward our benefactors. Forgive our enemies. Comfort all who mourn. Relieve all who suffer. Lord, hear; Lord, answer. Forgive and accept us through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CII. 16.

SCRIPTURE—NEHEMIAH II.

REMARKS.

The month Nisan, mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, is the first month in the sacred year of the Jews, and three months after Chisleu, so that it corresponds to part of our February and March. Artaxerxes the king of Persia, is supposed by many to have been the Ahasuerus who married Esther, and that she is the queen referred to in the 6th verse of this chapter. But it is more probable that Ahasuerus was the great Xerxes, much noticed in profane history; and that this was another prince, known by the name of Artaxerxes Longimanus, whose character was more humane and consistent than that of Ahasuerus, and whose reign answers better to the dates of scripture. Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, were foreigners who had intruded themselves among the Jews, and endeavoured to gain the rule of the city of Jerusalem. Sanballat afterwards built the temple on mount Gerizzim, where the Samaritans worshipped.

Infidels have alleged that there are two virtues omitted in the system of Christian morality; viz, friendship and patriotism. The most violent objections, however, are often advanced by those who have least acquaintance with the subject. It is a remarkable circumstance, that these very virtues are most beautifully and frequently exemplified and approved in the scriptures. The friendship of David and Jonathan, is only one striking instance out of many.

When or where was there such friendship as that of Christ for his apostles, particularly John?—And as to the love of our country; why the history of the Jews in the scriptures shows this sentiment run to excess; while in the conduct of Nehemiah, we have a noble example of a religious patriot.

But Christian patriotism was never so touchingly or powerfully manifested, as when the Lord Jesus wept over that city wherein he was to suffer death, and uttered the imploring words, 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but ye would not!'

Let us here observe also the importance of combining habits of prayer with habits of diligence in the use of means. You see that Nehemiah did not content himself with praying, however fervently, in the difficult and disheartening circumstances in which he was placed. He shows us a striking instance of the truth, that it is not only a possible thing, but a most consistent thing, to exercise the most humble and entire dependence upon God, along with zeal, and activity, and prudence, in the use of means. He waited for a favourable opportunity of bringing the case of Jerusalem before the king of Persia. He made the necessary arrangements for his absence; procured letters of safe conveyance, and of assistance in his object; and proceeded with the utmost caution and circumspection, that all unnecessary difficulties might be avoided. Let us in every good work do so likewise. Let us depend on God, and seek his blessing, but also labour in the accomplishment which we desire. Many seem to think that success depends on prayer alone. Many, that it depends upon our exertions alone. But it depends upon neither. It depends upon the will of God, who hath told us both to 'ask,' that we may receive, and to 'work' while it is called to-day.

Never let us be withheld from our duty by the opposition or the ridicule of bad men. It must needs be that offences come in this world. Nehemiah was withstood by enemies who laughed at his undertaking. Strong in the sense of God being on his side, he disregarded their sarcasms. Too often 'when persecution ariseth, straightway professors are offended.' They would be religious only when religion is in favour with men. They love not a cause, however excellent in itself, which exposes them to trouble. Such are not of those who 'overcome the world.' Such are not of those who 'have come out of tribulation,' as 'conquerors through him that loved them!' Let us estimate all our difficulties in the Christian course at their proper value. If God be for us, who can be against us? Let us ever remember, too, the end of a Christian's pilgrimage. The earthly Jerusalem again lieth waste and forsaken. But the heavenly Jerusalem shall never be destroyed. We seek a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Let us so walk that we may obtain, and pray for grace to enable us so to walk.

PRAYER.

Most gracious God! help us, whenever we approach thee, or thy word, to do so in simpli-

city of mind, and sincerity of heart. May thy holy scriptures be profitable to us, at all times, for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, and may what we have now read be blest to us. Lord, thou hast been very favourable unto us. Our lot has been cast amidst light and liberty, and we can worship thee, in public, or in private, no man making us afraid. Bless our country. Bless yet more abundantly these united kingdoms with the grace of thy Holy Spirit. Bless our sovereign, our rulers, and the whole body of the people. Blot out our national sins. And may the knowledge of thee, and of Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, make all governments, throughout the world, more and more conducive to the best interests of mankind. But we know, O God, that this world passeth away; and we bless thee that thou hast made known to our faith and our hope another and a better. Thou hast not indeed dealt with us according to our iniquities. Even when men were sinners against thee, Christ died that they might be saved. We are sinners, O God, against mercy as well as against truth. But O look on us in the face of thine Anointed. Put a new song of praise into our mouth, that for us mercy rejoiceth against judgment. Write thy law in our hearts. Renew right spirits within us. And while thou enablest us to put off all unrighteousness, whether of the body or of the spirit, give us assurance of thy love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and perseverance therein until the end. But whether thou grantest, or withholdest from us, in thy wisdom, the higher privileges of thy reconciled children, may our souls prosper and be in health. Lord, enable us, by thy Holy Spirit, to discharge aright, and for the promotion of thy glory, all the duties to which thou callest us. May we be honoured instruments in thy hand, of advancing thy kingdom upon earth, however humble may be the sphere we occupy. Whether as rulers or subjects, teachers or taught, masters or servants, parents or children, may we ever act as seeing him who is invisible; may we walk as before the Lord, while we are in the land of the living, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but esteeming it a small thing to be judged of man's judgment; knowing that he who judgeth us, is the Lord. For all the mercies of the past night and this morning, O heavenly Father, accept our imperfect thanks. We are pilgrims and sojourners upon earth. Lord, hide not thy face from us. We know not what a day or an hour may bring forth. But do thou according to thy mercy with us, O God. Be still the light of

our life, the strength of our hearts, our portion for ever, and answer our prayers with grace, mercy, and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 44.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XXVI.

REMARKS.

Nothing could be more admirable, more truly dignified, than the behaviour and the speech of Paul, on this trying occasion. The eloquence and classic beauty of his defence before Agrippa have always been acknowledged, but it is in still higher qualities that its excellence consists. As an example of firm faith in God and a good cause, of humility combined with proper self-respect, of sound reasoning, of graceful courtesy, in union with fervent love to the souls of men, Paul here pre-eminently displays the effects of that grace from on high which had renewed him. Though it may not be given us to emulate the intellectual talents of God's more distinguished servants, we can always endeavour to imitate their graces. Talent unsanctified is often only a snare to its possessor. And though no good gift is to be despised, yet it is not the talented mind, but the sanctified heart, by which we are made meet for heaven. Here we see how Paul had devoted all the powers of his mind to the service of Jesus; but we see more strikingly displayed, both here and elsewhere, how changed too his soul had become under the power of the truth as it is in Jesus. Formerly he breathed violence and slaughter against the innocent and defenceless, and in the fury of his fanaticism persecuted them to the utmost. Now, that fanaticism was changed into the gentleness which wished that all his persecutors were as himself, excepting in his bonds. Formerly he was 'exceedingly mad' against men whose cause was peace on earth, and good-will to all. Now when he was declared a madman while speaking the words of truth and soberness, his soul was filled with one object,—the salvation of men, to the glory of God. Great was the change which had taken place in this man. Such a change is necessary in every human being. We are all naturally alienated from God. We are all practically at enmity with God, until our nature is renewed by divine grace. And though we have no reason to expect a visible miracle to work such a change, yet the power must be from God. Has that 'turning from the service of sin to the love of God,' taken place in our hearts? Do we count all things else loss, that we may win Christ, and be found in him? Or do any of us 'think with themselves, that they may do any thing contrary to the commandment of Jesus Christ?' O let us be assured, that there is no safety, honour, or happiness, but in being sons of God; born again by his Spirit unto newness of life; living on the sincere milk of his word, and growing thereby; and trained by the dis-

cipline which he sees fit to appoint for us, to glory, honour, and immortality.

Let us learn, from the example of Paul, the importance of 'searching the scriptures.' We must be ready to 'give to every man a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness,' and this cannot be done well without being learned in the scriptures. But let us beware lest our knowledge of the scriptures be merely speculative. Agrippa was acquainted with all the customs and questions of the Jews, yet he was not converted. He said he was 'almost persuaded to be a Christian,' but this was probably only a mere complimentary expression of his admiration at Paul's ability and eloquence. Let our knowledge actuate our conduct.

Finally let us learn, from Paul's example, to put our trust in the Lord, and fear no evil, except sin. We may never be called on to encounter similar trials to his, but every Christian's course has trials of its own. Christ promised to his apostles 'a mouth and wisdom,' when they should be brought before kings and governors for his name's sake. Ample was the promise accomplished. He has also promised to all his followers, that his grace would be sufficient for them; ample has that promise, too, been fulfilled in every age. Let us not be straitened in his fullness. Let us devote ourselves to his cause, and rest satisfied that whatever work he may give us to do, he will supply also the strength to do it.

PRAYER.

Unite our hearts, O God, to praise thy name, and enable us to appear in spirit before thee as becometh the creatures of thy power, the dependents on thy bounty, and the undeserving objects of thy long-suffering mercy. Enable us to believe, with the heart unto righteousness, that thou art, and that thou art the rewarder of all who diligently seek thee; and forbid that we should take thy holy name rashly or carelessly into our mouths. Follow with thy blessing, we entreat thee, our reading and meditation on thy word. May we ever esteem it our unspeakable privilege that we can make the word of the Lord the man of our counsel. What are we, and what is our father's house, that thou shouldst so have cared for us. Things which were hidden from the wise and prudent, thou hast revealed unto us. Lord, bless the knowledge of thy truth to our souls. Lord, perfect thine own praise, in the mouths of babes and sucklings. Feed us with that spiritual food which is convenient for us, and build us up daily, towards the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. Our Father which art in heaven, we desire to give thee grateful thanks for all the grace and mercy which we have experienced at thy hand, during the day, and throughout the week, which are now closing over us. Thou hast granted us life and favour, and thy visitations have preserved our spirits. We would remember that the day

of life draweth rapidly to its close; that the times and the seasons are bearing us swiftly to eternity, that the night cometh in which no man can work, and that we know not how soon we may be summoned before thee. O pardon, most merciful Saviour, our innumerable transgressions. . . Work in us yet more and more, O Holy Spirit, to will and to do of thy good pleasure. Deliver us from all evil, Almighty God, and sanctify us wholly for thine own name's sake. While we look forward to the privileges of another Sabbath, if it be thy will that we awaken to another day on earth, we pray that thou wouldst prepare us to profit by our advantages. May we be in the spirit on the Lord's day. May our wants be supplied, our sins subdued, our faith strengthened, our love increased. O blessed be thou, our gracious God, who hast not only given us sabbaths in time, as resting-places amidst the toils of our earthly pilgrimage, but hast given us the hope of an everlasting sabbath, to succeed these toils, and satisfy our souls with more than we can ask or think. What shall we render unto thee for all thy benefits? What can we render? Nothing but ourselves! To thee and thy service, O Lord God! unworthy, polluted as the offering is, yet for his sake in whom thou art well pleased, accept us, bless us, and cause thy face to shine upon us. We pray for all our brethren of mankind, that they may be enlightened, sanctified, and saved. Send forth thy light to the dark places of the earth, which are still the habitations of cruelty. Thy kingdom come. And now, O Lord, we commit our souls to thy keeping. Mercifully hear us, and grant an answer to our prayers in peace, for Christ our Saviour's sake. Amen.

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXXXIV.

REMARKS.

This psalm describes the feelings of a believer, deprived for a time of the visible communion of the church. But though deprived, not insensible to his loss, or indifferent to the repossession of ordinances. Absence from the sanctuary has only more endeared its privileges to his heart. The place of his exile can supply no object to his affections, it yields no substitute to fill the void in his soul. With earnest and vehement desire he looks back to the tabernacles

which his feet had once trod, to the courts of the Lord, where with his brethren he had kept holiday; and as if the world beside were a wilderness, and had in it no spot of beauty to be desired, he breaks forth at the recollection into the exclamation, 'how amiable, how unequalled; how surpassing for beauty are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts.' The sanctuary he had experienced to be God's meeting-place with his soul, and its ordinances to be streams from the rivers of pleasure that are at his right hand. What would he not give that the communication might again be opened between his soul, and the streams that make glad the city of God. His soul is athirst like the parched tongue of the traveller in a desert land; what would he not give for a cup of water? The true Israelite replies, 'I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.' Riches, rank, office, every worldly consideration, he would willingly resign, and choose the least honoured of employments in the church, could he only thereby recover the blessings of ordinances. 'His soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; his heart and flesh crieth out for the living God.' Let us not be amongst those who neglect the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is. Absent and without loss we may be from the assemblies of the world; its assemblies of pleasure, or politics, or business. From these our absence may be gain. But to withhold our foot from the assembly of the church, is to denounce ourselves excommunicated from the believer's faith, is to avow that we have no song of praise at the tidings, 'the Lord is risen;' that to us Christ is no Saviour, his cross no pledge of pardon, his empty tomb no pledge of resurrection, his ascension no pledge of future glory. Ask the apostles why they assembled together in public worship on the first day of the week, and they will reply, 'the Lord is risen.' Wilfully, therefore, and habitually to absent ourselves from the assembly of the saints, is to renounce our belief in Christ's resurrection, is to abjure this doctrine, and to pronounce the joyful tidings of an empty tomb, and a risen exalted Saviour, no longer worthy of being celebrated with the household of faith. And as we repair to the 'courts of the Lord,' let us remember that the church is still Christ's meeting place. The preacher's words may be void of all eloquence, his speech ungainly, his mental capacities weak, his thoughts as a thrice told tale; yet, with joy will the believer repair to the house of God, for there has Christ promised to meet with him, to bless him, and to do him good. By the Spirit of Christ resting upon him, he will gather spiritual riches amidst the poverty of human ministrations, as the Indian gathers golden particles amidst barren sands.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou hast in thy great mercy, preserved us to behold the light, and enter upon the holy rest, of another day of the Son of man; thou hast called us again to rejoice at the tidings, The Lord is risen, and hath appeared unto many; and to magnify thy faithfulness in thy promise,

that thine holy One should not see corruption. Separate and sanctify our hearts this day for thy peculiar service. Enable us to say to all worldly cares, intruding anxieties, and to the tumult of earthly thoughts and passions, Be still, and know that this is the day of the Lord. Grant unto us throughout the day a habitual recollection of thy command, Remember the sabbath to keep it holy. Pour out thy Spirit upon us, as thou didst upon thy servant John—banished to the isle of Patmos for the testimony of Jesus; and make known thy word unto us. Let thy Spirit take of the word of Christ, and show it unto our souls. Teach us sin's hatefulnes, its opposition to thy most perfect and holy law, the dishonour it casts upon thy majesty, the destruction it brings upon our own souls, the agony with which it pierced the Lord of glory. Bring home to our consciences the charges of thy word, that we may be led to take refuge underneath the wings of Immanuel. Thou that openest the prison doors and settest the prisoners free, loose this day our bonds, proclaim to our souls the year of jubilee, the acceptable year of the Lord. Grant unto us a simple faith in the great propitiation and assured confidence in the word and promise of God. Give us to know, that we are known of thee; that we are the sheep of thy pasture. Say unto us, Thine iniquities are forgiven, thy sin is purged. Bless every member of this family apart; let us individually, and as a household, receive from thee the grace we need. Grant that our earthly may be a type of the heavenly home; of the peace, the love, the charity, that reign in the family above; and with prayers for our household, we would unite our supplications for the whole household of faith; beseeching thee especially to bless the pastor whom thou hast set over us in holy things, and richly to endue his soul with every needful gift and grace of thy Spirit. Purify the sons of Levi; purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering of righteousness. Cause all thy goodness and grace to pass before us, that in the assembly of thy church we shall feel with Jacob, this is none other than the house of God, this is the very gate of heaven. O Lord God of hosts, hear this our prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob. Behold, O God, our shield, look on the face of thine anointed. For his sake hear us graciously, and forgive us freely. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXVII.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXXXVII.

REMARKS.

Amongst the other excellencies and glories of the church celebrated in this psalm, this stands conspicuous; that it is the birth-place of souls. Of you it shall be said, 'This and that man was born in her,' and again, 'the Lord shall count when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there.' The name given to the church, 'the birth-place of souls,' implies, that there is such a thing as conversion. For why should the church be signalized by this name, if man needed no change of character, if his soul required no conversion.

But the designation given by the psalmist to the church, not only implies the validity of conversion, but describes its nature. Some change, no man who reflects at all upon the human character, but will allow is necessary and desirable before a man passes from this life, and appears before the Judge of the quick and the dead. There is upon all hearts the conviction that it is not well to appear in the presence of God, with a soul unwashed from sin; that heaven is not the place where a polluted heart can dwell; that the royal presence where all are clothed with white robes, is not the place for him who is still clothed with a filthy garment. It is a conviction which the conscience of the natural man, notwithstanding his aversion to this scriptural change, can but ill conceal from himself, a conviction which he cannot suppress, that the earthly unrenewed heart is a tenant but ill fitted for heaven. It is not possible for him to reflect upon his own character, the habitual bent and inclination of his mind, the current of his desires, the objects of his affections, his ruling passions, and compare these with the pursuits, and employments, and affections of the company around the throne, without perceiving that ere he can mingle with that blessed throng, some essential change must take place, that will alter the character of heaven, or alter the character of his heart. To one or other of these conclusions he is inevitably shut up. Either he or heaven must be changed. Heaven must be brought down to the standard of his tastes, or his character must be elevated to the standard of its employments; heaven must be lowered in its spirituality to meet his character, or his character must be elevated to meet the spirituality of heaven; heaven must become less holy to meet and sympathize with his unholy affections, or he must be created anew, to meet and sympathize with the holiness of heaven. The psalmist has decided upon which party the change must be accomplished, and at the same time described the greatness of the change, in celebrating the church as the birth-place of souls? Reader, has the church been the birth-place of your soul. You have again heard this day of the glorious things of the city of God, of a Saviour's love, humiliation, cross, burial, ascension, intercession, advocacy. Christ has been pleading with you, the Spirit has

been striving with you; both have been urging, 'receive ye the grace of God.' Shall it be written this day in heaven concerning you, 'this man was born in Zion,' or has it already been written in the records of heaven, 'Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when we shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou hast not dealt with us, as with those of our brethren who still sit in the region and shadow of death. Thou hast appointed to us thy sabbaths; thou hast given to us thine ordinances; thou hast called us to the assembly of thy saints; thou hast permitted us to join in the prayers and praises of the great congregation; our eyes have again beheld our teachers, and we have received the words of life from thy lips. Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but the glory is due unto thee. Thou only makest us to differ from the poor heathen, who fashions with his tools a graven image, and saith unto it, Thou art my God. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us be stirred up to magnify his holy name, who hath not left us to grope amidst the darkness of idolatry, nor subjected us to the humiliation of being carried away by dumb idols, and receiving, as our God, the principalities and the powers of darkness. From so great a spiritual death, thou, Lord, hast saved us. Thou hast given to us our lot in a land of Christian light; our lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, thou hast given to us the goodly heritage of thy word. Let not our distinguished privileges prove to us the greater condemnation; let not that awful sentence descend upon our souls, If I had not come among them, and done the things which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. Verily, O God, we confess before thee, that henceforth we are without excuse. We beseech thee seal divine instruction upon our hearts, and often recall to our memories the glorious things which have this day been spoken to us of the city of God. Thou who lovest the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, throw wide the gates of righteousness, that the nations of the earth may enter in. Incline the heart of thine ancient people to seek the Lord their God, and David their king; cause their captivity to return, and have mercy upon them. And more especially we pray for our beloved land, for the church of the reformation thou hast planted therein. Look, Lord, upon its desolations, and rebuild the waste places thereof. O thou who watchest over Israel, and grantest unto thy beloved sleep,

watch over our family during the darkness and silence of the night. Let not our beds become our graves. Let us not sleep the sleep of death. O wash us in the purifying blood of thine own Son. Clothe us with his perfect righteousness, that when we sleep, to awake not again until the heavens be no more, we may appear before thee righteous in the Lord our righteousness, unto whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed dominion and praise, now and ever. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CII. 16.

SCRIPTURE—NEHEMIAH IV.

REMARKS.

Nehemiah, we learn from the preceding chapters, whilst a captive in Babylon, was raised to the honourable post of cup-bearer to Artaxerxes the king, a post which brought him near the royal person, and gave him the privilege of the royal ear. This situation he employed as a means of advancing the cause which lay nearest his heart as a Jew,—the rebuilding and restoration of his native city. The pomp of the palace, the presence and favour of royalty, the luxuries and splendours of an eastern court, could avail nothing to withdraw his thoughts from the desolate city where lay the sepulchres of his fathers, the once favoured city of his God. Though surrounded by earthly comforts, and holding in his hand a cup full of prosperity, his countenance is sad, and his heart melancholy, when he thinks of the waste places of Jerusalem; and willingly would he forego his ease and plenty, that he might help forward the rebuilding of its ruins. Through the favour of his royal master he obtains his liberty, and is commissioned to execute the very work on which his heart was fixed. No sooner, however, has he arrived at Jerusalem, and begun to repair its wastes, than he finds an enemy, or rather a combination of enemies, ready to oppose his design, and scorn and ridicule his attempt. How does he act in this crisis? Is he disconcerted at the unexpected opposition? Is he alarmed by the strength and formidable character of the combination, into the abandonment of his undertaking? Not so irresolute and feeble in purpose is the good Nehemiah. His zeal is not to be quenched by the laughter of a fool, or his courage intimidated by the union of infidel and Samaritan. He knew that every pious work must have its opponents, and that when the friends of God arise to build, his enemies will arise to destroy or prevent the work. Confident in the goodness of his cause, confident of the integrity of his motive, though that cause seemed feeble, and less energetic spirits might have given it up in despair, his ardour suffers no abatement from the obstacles that lie in his path. Jerusalem in ruins is before his eyes; the city of his God is a waste; the sepulchres of his fathers, the

ground hallowed by the tombs of patriarchs, prophets, and holy men of God, lie undistinguished amidst the wide spread ruin; these ever before him feed the fire of a zeal which many waters cannot quench. 'The God of heaven, he will prosper us.' This is the ground of his confidence, it is also his principle of action,—'therefore will we arise and build.' To confidence in the word, he adds diligence in the work of God, and to both, he adds the spirit of prayer. Whilst he believes, he works; whilst he works, he prays. He works, because he believes it is the pleasure of God to build up Zion; and he prays, to sanctify the work.

Go, christian, and do so likewise. Believe it is God's good pleasure that the wastes of Zion be repaired, that the Saviour see of the travail of his soul in the extension of the church which he has bought with his blood; fear not the enemies encamped against it, let diligence and prayer, let the spirit of action and the spirit of dependence, prove your faith. Believe, and whilst you believe, labour in the good work of the Lord; and whilst you labour, let 'prayer be made without ceasing to God.'

PRAYER.

O God, we come before thee as sinners, but thou, O Lord, hast showed to us what is good, and what the Lord requireth of us; even that we should plead the sacrifice of thine own Son, and that we should appear before thee sprinkled with his precious blood, and righteous in his righteousness. At thy footstool we renounce every other plea; in thy holy presence we know of no other righteousness; and, in the prospect of appearing at thy judgment-seat, our alone desire is to win Christ, and to be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God through faith. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift, Jesus Christ. Thanks be unto his great name for in whatever measure he has disposed and inclined our hearts, by his Holy Spirit, to obey the gospel call, and receive the offered reconciliation, for opening our eyes to behold the gulf into which sin had plunged us, and awakening in our souls a timely alarm, and prompting the inquiry, What shall we do to be saved? If it be known to thee, thou Searcher of all hearts, that any member of this family has rejected the offered salvation, and refused to be reconciled unto God, O let not thy Holy Spirit be grieved; say not of that soul, It is joined to its idols, let it alone; seal not its perdition by the withdrawal of thy Spirit. Thou who raisest the dead, and quickenest whom thou wilt, raise and quicken into newness of spiritual life every soul among us, hitherto dead in trespasses and sins. Make us partakers of the same faith, the same joyful hope, and heirs, at last, of the same blessed kingdom. Where thou hast begun a good work in

our hearts, carry it on to the day of everlasting redemption. Perfect that which concerneth us. Sanctify us wholly in soul, body, and spirit. As we are about to enter upon the business and employments of our calling, after the rest of thy holy sabbath, strengthen us to maintain the testimony of Jesus in the world. Whilst we are in the world, may it yet be manifest that we are not of the world, and may our hearts be habitually kept above it. Like thy servant Nehemiah, may we both pray, and set our watch against the enemies of our souls, that encamp around us. Like him, may we deem no sacrifice great, no self-denial painful, no toil wearisome, no contest arduous, to which Christ calls us, in the maintenance of our faith, and of his glory. May it be our meat and drink to do his will, and may we run with greater alacrity in the way of his commandments, than we have ever done to serve our own lusts and pleasures. And whilst we are pursuing our necessary and lawful callings, may it still be in our hearts to give glory to God, and may we still be contriving for the advancement of his kingdom. Appear, O Lord, with glory, and build up Zion, and hasten the establishment of the kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Hasten it for thine elect's sake; hasten it for the glory of thy Son; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed dominion, and glory, and praise, now and ever. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CVII. 23.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XXVII.

REMARKS.

It was promised to Paul, in a vision, more than two years before the shipwreck narrated in this chapter, that he should 'see Rome.' When the promise was first given he lay a prisoner in Jerusalem, guarded by the double jealousy and hatred of rulers and people, and charged with the crimes of profanity and sedition. His escape seemed hopeless, and the fulfilment of the promise impracticable. Yet in twenty-four hours after the vision, the providence of God is at work for the fulfilment of his promise. The enemies of Paul plot to murder him, but though banded by oaths and sworn to secrecy, a bird in the air whispers the story of meditated assassination. The plot for his murder is over-ruled for his deliverance, and before the revolution of a day from the intimation of the vision, his prison doors are thrown open, he is mounted on horseback by the humanity of the Roman tribune, and with his escort is proceeding on his way to Cesarea, which is a stage

on his way to Rome. But here his progress is arrested. The cupidity of Felix, who hoped to have obtained money for his release, detains him two years a prisoner. But God is not slack concerning his promise. A new governor succeeds Felix, which is the occasion of bringing the apostle to a new trial; and again, by the workings of his providence, does God advance to the fulfilment of his promise. 'I appeal unto Cæsar,' said Paul in his second pleading, 'Unto Cæsar,' replied Festus, 'thou shalt go.' And now Paul is on his second stage on his way to Rome. He embarks at Adramyttium, and is fairly launched upon the Mediterranean, to prosecute his voyage. Surely no obstacle can now intervene between him and the promise 'thou shalt see Rome.' Divine providence has wrought for the accomplishment of that word of promise, against the craft and cruelty of Jewish, and the avarice and selfishness of heathen, rulers. Princes, priests, and people combined against it only to become the instruments of its fulfilment. What power can now rise to oppose it. One power yet remains. God has yet to teach his apostle that the wrath of the elements, as well as the wrath of man, shall praise him, and that opposing and angry tempests, the 'fire, the hail, and the stormy winds, fulfil his word.' Paul shall see Rome, not only though assassins plot his death, and high priests and Jewish rulers falsely accuse him, and a corrupt heathen judge wrongously hold him in prison, but in spite of a tempest-tossed ocean, and a heaven obscured with clouds and darkened with vapour, where no sun, or moon, or star is visible, and a frail vessel dashed on a barbarous shore, and scattered as a wreck on the waste of waters. What enforcement does such a narrative lend to the injunction of our Lord, 'Be not faithless, but believing.' What confirmation to the scripture, 'The word of the Lord is sure.' Accept always the word of promise; and though all outward and visible circumstances proclaim the promise a lie; though earth and hell, the wrath of man, the fury of the elements, seem to stand in the way of its fulfilment, quietly wait and thou shalt see the glory of God. Leave with him the accomplishment. He stilleth the noise of the waves, he stilleth the tumults of the people. Not one jot or tittle shall pass away till all be fulfilled.

PRAYER.

Thou, O Lord, reignest, thou art clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength wherewith he hath girded himself. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. There is none, Lord, like unto thee; thou declarest the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. Thine eyes are upon the ways of man, and thou seest all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves. Thou knowest their works and overturnest them in the night,

so that they are destroyed. The wicked plot against the just, but thou takest them in the net which their own hands have spread. Thou turnest their wisdom into folly and their counsels into confusion, and the devices they had imagined into the accomplishment of thy word. Teach us, O Lord, to mark the course of thy providence and to adore the wisdom by which thou overrulest all things for the advancement of thy church, and for the benefit of thy chosen. Many there be that rise up against thy people. Many there be that say of their souls, There is no help for them in God. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for them, thou art their glory and the lifter up of their heads. Strengthen our faith in thy word of promise; to hope even against hope; to trust God while his way is in the deep, and his path in the mighty ocean, and though his footsteps cannot be traced. When thou art pleased to try us by affliction, or by poverty, or by bereavements, when clouds and darkness are around thy throne, enable us to cast all anxious care and foreboding fears upon him, who calls us to be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and by supplication, to make our requests known unto God. May our hearts be encouraged in seasons of trial, by meditating upon thy dealings with thy saints of old. When thou settest before us Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, Paul in shipwreck, teach us to trust thee farther than we see thee, and when all providences are against us, still to hope in thy word. By thy good and watchful providence over us we have been preserved amidst the dangers of another day. Thou hast not been unmindful of us, though we have been unmindful of thee. Enter not into judgment with us for the sins of this by-gone day. Let thy Holy Spirit lead us anew to the fountain which thou hast opened for sin and for uncleanness. Wash thou us, and we shall be clean; purify us, and we shall be whiter than the snow. Grant unto every member of this family the grace of true repentance, godly sorrow for sin, humility, penitence, habitual tenderness of conscience, and to fear sin worse than death. Grant a child-like simplicity of faith in the efficacy of the blood of the great atonement. O let that blood be sprinkled upon every member of this family. Unite us as a family of the faithful. Renew thine image upon each of our souls. Having received from thee the gift of life, bestow upon us the better gift of life for evermore, that when the few and sorrowful days of our earthly pilgrimage are ended, we may be made partakers together of life everlasting. Advance, we beseech thee, thy kingdom of

grace, as the forerunner of thy kingdom of glory. Let the tidings of redeeming love be carried, by the swift messengers of the gospel, into all lands. Forget not, we pray thee, the land of our fathers. Behold and visit the vine which thou hast planted, and the branch which thou hast made strong for thyself. Let our country be as the garden of the Lord, as a field which the Lord has blessed. Revive thy cause. Pour out thy Holy Spirit upon us. When the chief Shepherd shall appear, may we as a family appear with him in glory. Through his all-sufficient sacrifice, and prevailing intercession, we present our prayers to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXVII. 3.

SCRIPTURE—NEHEMIAH V.

REMARKS.

There is a remarkable particularity in the tenth commandment, 'thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.' Here God, as it were, first writes out a minute inventory of all a man's possessions, and pronounces over each separate division, 'this thou shalt not covet;' and then, lest perverted ingenuity should imagine it had discovered some unnoticed department uncovered by the divine interdict, God embraces the whole under one inclusive description, 'thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy neighbour's.' The wisdom of God is peculiarly evident in the structure of this commandment; for as 'by the law is the knowledge of sin,' and as the object of that knowledge is, that 'every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God,' so it was needful that the light of this law should reveal all the dark windings by which the human heart endeavours to evade its binding power, or to palliate or excuse the breaches of its requirement. Many are the evils of covetousness. These evils first descend upon him who indulges covetousness. It is an appetite always craving, but never satisfied; it is an effort always toiling, often disappointed; and, though successful in accumulating to the utmost limits of its desires, 'what is a man profited should he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what would a man give in exchange for his soul?' But in addition to all these personal evils and disappointments, covetousness is a public crime. Wrapt up in impenetrable selfishness, it feels no sympathy with distress. Hateful to God and man, it fixes on the very hour of public calamity as the hour of its secret joy; and converts the public loss into sources of its private gain. Of this result of *covetousness*, the chapter read affords a melancholy

example. The Jews were just returned from a miserable captivity. Their city was but rising from its ruins; the wall of defence was not yet builded; enemies were many, treacherous, and cruel; and, 'because of the dearth' of provisions, many of the people were compelled to part with 'land, vineyard, and houses;' yea, so pressing was the calamity that some were compelled to 'bring into bondage their very sons and their daughters, that they might eat and live.' Under these circumstances, Nehemiah was 'angry.' Now, though anger is often a sinful passion; yet, (Eph. iv. 26.) a man may be 'angry and sin not.' Our Lord (Mark iii. 5.) 'looked round on the Jews with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts,' a hardness that infidelity had produced; so Nehemiah was righteously angry with the hardness that covetousness had produced. Yet the scriptures, whilst they prohibit and detest the 'usury' of the covetous, do not thereby prohibit the reception or requirement of a just and equitable return for the use of money lent. This will be obvious from Deut. xxiii. 19, 20. and from Mat. xxv. 27. The 'usury' prohibited by the scriptures is, not an equitable share of the profit derivable from the use of money lent in ordinary terms, but what covetousness exhausts from necessity in times of private difficulty, or public calamity. In such times of distress, the heart of the Christian, like that of Nehemiah, is melted, and seeks only new plans of relief; but the heart of the covetous is hardened, and devises only new plans of gain. Woe unto the covetous, if they will not repent! Their money shall perish with them! Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed on the earth: and he will not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. So God dealt with Nehemiah, and so will he deal with all that fear his name, and long for his glorious appearing. Let us, (Luke xii. 16.) 'take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' Let us beware, lest in the very hour when all wisest plans are perfected, and all worldly goods secured, God should say unto any of us, 'thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.' Lord, give us grace to covet nothing but the best gifts; the unsearchable riches of Jesus.

PRAYER.

Lord God Almighty, thou art the preserver of men. Thine eye watched over us through the night, and thy power has raised us to the light of a new day. Make us duly thankful for all the mercies of the past, and mightily strengthen us for all the duties of the future. Our times are entirely in thy hands. Enable us to dedicate every moment to the advancement of thy honour and glory. Let the time past of our lives suffice to have wrought our own will, and henceforth give us grace to do thy will on earth, even as it is done in heaven. Lord, our sins have been many; they have been great in them-

selves, and by reason of many aggravations they have been heinous in thy sight. We have possessed thy written word, but, alas! we have not studied it with care; we have possessed a preached gospel, but, alas! we have often stopped our ears; we have been invited to communion with God, but, alas! we have loved the world. Enter not, O God, into judgment with us for these things; but lead us to the Lamb slain, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. Deeply convince us of our sin and misery; clearly enlighten us in the knowledge of Christ; entirely renew our wills; and graciously persuade and enable us to embrace the Saviour as he is proclaimed to sinners in the gospel. Show us all the love of Jesus, and let it mightily constrain us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in a present evil world. O let the love of Jesus separate us from the love of the world. Let it teach us to deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow him. Specially give us grace to flee from that covetousness which is idolatry, and give us godliness with contentment, the true and abiding gain. And lest we should be discontented with our lot, remind us of him who had not whereon to lay his head. Teach us, O Father, by his example, and enable us, by his Spirit, to renounce the world, to crucify the flesh, to resist the devil. Teach us by his example, and enable us by his Spirit, to have compassion on the poor, and, as God may give us the means and opportunity, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick, to consider the stranger, and compassionate the prisoner. Infuse this spirit, good Lord, into the hearts of all ranks, but especially into the hearts of the rich and the mighty, whom thou hast appointed unto this very stewardship. Let the bright examples of the holy men of old shine upon these our times; and let there be many, like thy servant Nehemiah, tender to compassionate the poor, wise to direct relief, and firm to execute every purpose of wisdom. Hear us, O God, from heaven, thy dwelling-place. Think upon us for good, and enable us, as we have opportunity, to do good unto all men, and especially to thy household of faith. And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXVIII. 7.

SCRIPTURE—ACTS XXVIII.

REMARKS.

If we seek a proof of Paul's sincerity, we find it in his sufferings: if we seek a proof of his divine commission, we find it in the miracles that he wrought, and the prophecies that he uttered. If we desire to test Paul's sincerity in preaching Jesus, let us turn to the enumeration of his sufferings, (2 Cor. xi. 23.) Compared with others, he was 'in labours more abundant, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews, five times received he forty stripes, save one. Thrice was he beaten with rods, once was he stoned, thrice he suffered shipwreck, a day and a night was he in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that were without, that which came upon him daily—the care of all the churches.' Nothing but sincerity could induce any man to exchange country, and home, and friends, and riches, and honours, and ease, for a life of such uninterrupted labour and suffering; and that too, labour and suffering without either prospect, or promise, or hope, of mitigation; but, on the contrary, with the prospect and certainty of their increase, till his course should be finished, and his warfare accomplished. And, if we desire to test Paul's divine commission, we find him (verse 8.) in the full possession and exercise of the miraculous powers promised by our Saviour to his apostles. He enters the house of a sick man, prays, and lays his hands on him, and heals him: whereupon, others also who had diseases in the island where he was shipwrecked, came and were healed. In addition to this miraculous power, we find him in possession of the prophetic spirit. 'Be it known,' saith he to the Jews, (verse 28.) 'that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it.' Now this confident assertion of the apostles, that the Gentiles would receive the gospel, as certainly as the Jews rejected it, was, at the time of its utterance, the most unlikely of all events. And yet, it has been verified in Christendom during the long period of eighteen hundred years, and is still marching onward to farther fulfilment through every continent and island. Hasten, Lord, the time when all the heathen shall be thine inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth thy possession!

The chapter furnishes us with many instructive lessons. We find a 'barbarous people,' showing the apostle and his shipwrecked companions 'no little kindness.' How much more, then, must it be the duty of a people, when civilized, and Christianized, to show greater 'kindness,' according to their greater knowledge and greater means. We find Paul employ his time in visiting and healing the sick. And though we possess not the same miraculous power of

healing, yet every Christian possesses the same access to the throne of grace, the same word of truth and comfort, and should therefore employ the talent with which God has entrusted him. From this narrative we may farther learn, how much a Christian people may support ministers under difficulties. When the brethren came out to meet Paul (verse 15.) he 'thanked God and took courage.' Whilst we depend on the providence of God for every thing, we are all the agents of providence for one another. A word of encouragement in season, a look of affection, the simplest act of kindness, may produce the most important results on a minister's own mind, and inspirit him anew for the service of God and his people. Lastly, we may learn the awful consequences of rejecting a preached gospel.

PRAYER.

Almighty, most merciful, and everlasting God, hear us, the creatures of a day. Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment, and, as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and of thy years there shall be no end. Show to us, Lord, the end and measure of our days, that we may know how frail we are; and so teach us to number our few and uncertain years, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. And, now that another day is gone, and another night arrived, may we have wisdom to consider that we are another day nearer to death, to judgment, and to eternity. O that we were indeed wise! that we understood this,—that we should consider our latter end! Lord, grant us grace to live waiting and watching for thy call. And whether it come by day, at midnight, or in the morning, may we all be found ready. And now, O Lord, so long as our years are lengthened out teach us to walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Give us grace to employ our time in seeking to learn more of God; in seeking more conformity to his will; in mortifying the deeds of the body, that we may live; and in bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit in all holiness, that our heavenly Father may be glorified in the world. Yet, Lord, we must confess, that we have been very unprofitable servants. We have wasted our precious time on vanities. We have been as men spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not. Yet blessed be thy holy name, O God, thou desirest not the death of a sinner, but rather it is thy desire, that he should turn unto thee and live. O turn us, and we shall be turned; *draws us, and we shall run after thee.* Raise

our affections from the earth, and set them upon things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. By the cross of Christ let us now be crucified to the world, and the world to us; and let the life that we shall henceforth live in the flesh, be by the faith of the Son of God. Let Christ be our life; and, unworthy in ourselves though we be, when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory. Remember in thy mercy, O Lord, all our dear friends and kind benefactors; and if we have enemies, forgive them, O God, and teach us from the heart to forgive them likewise. Remember in thy mercy all that voyage on the seas, and protect and deliver them in the hour of danger. Remember for good, all sick and afflicted persons. Fit the living for life, and the dying for death. Bless the word of instruction and comfort when addressed to their ear. Make it better than a medicine for their sickness, or oil and wine for their wounds. Open the ears of men, O Lord, that they may every where hear and obey thy word. Take away in mercy the blindness from the eyes of Israel, and in truth and holiness uphold thy Gentile churches. Rule in the hearts of our rulers, and let righteousness exalt the nation. Let thy salvation be nigh to them that fear thee, that glory may dwell in our land. Grant to us that which is good; and the earth shall yield her increase. Take away, O Lord, thine anger from us for ever; for thou art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. Keep us through the night, and if, in thy providence, we are spared till another day, may we go forth again to serve thee in newness of life. And to the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, the everlasting God, be glory for ever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XX.

SCRIPTURE—NEHEMIAH VI.

REMARKS.

Amongst the many remarkable persons and characters presented in the scriptures, Nehemiah holds a distinguished place. His first remarkable feature is piety, as appears from his prayer 'day and night' before the Lord, as recorded in the first chapter, and from his constant practice, as appears in the second chapter, fourth verse, and on every fitting occasion throughout his entire history. Even a heathen could discover and declare, that 'no man ever became truly great without a divine impulse.' May not a Christian more clearly perceive the origin

of Nehemiah's greatness of design and performance in that 'spirit of grace and supplication' which God had shed abroad in his heart? A second remarkable feature in Nehemiah's character is, his affections are mightily drawn to patriotism. Like Paul, 'his brethren, his kindred according to the flesh,' and 'his heart's desire and prayer to God for them is, that they might be saved.' For their sakes he sacrificed ease and honours; for their sakes he exposed himself to toils and dangers, nor counted his life dear to himself, if so be he could benefit his people. And if this grace was shed abroad in the heart of Nehemiah under the law, how much more, under the gospel, should the heart of every Christian be filled with 'love to the brethren?' For if we love not our brethren whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen? The third remarkable feature in the character of Nehemiah is generosity. This appears from the extensive hospitality he maintained, embracing alike the rich and the poor of his own countrymen, and extending to the strangers who were attracted from amongst the heathen. Similar are the exhortations (Heb. xiii. 2.) 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers,' and (1 Pet. iv. 9.) 'Use hospitality one towards another, without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.' The last feature in Nehemiah's character to which we would advert, is his unshaken courage in times of danger, so eminently exemplified in the chapter now read. All the foreign enemies of the Jews conspired to make them afraid, saying, 'Their hands shall be weakened from the work' of building the walls, 'that it be not done.' And domestic traitors, even in the garb of prophets, hired, like Balaam, by the wages of iniquity, endeavoured to deter him from the work by threats of assassination. To the foreign enemies who plotted to entrap him by a proposed meeting at a distance from the city, he answers, 'I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease whilst I leave it, and come down to you?' and so he escaped this snare. Hence we learn, that the best preservative against the snares of every enemy, whether temporal or spiritual, is diligence in the great and peculiar work of Christian duty which God has commanded us to perform. To the domestic traitor he answers, by a combined reference to his rank, duty, and character—'Should such a man as I flee? And who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.' He would have gone in for worship; he will not go in from fear. He feared God, which fear gives deliverance (Ps. xxxiv. 7.); and he escaped thereby the 'fear of man, which ever bringeth a snare,' Prov. xxix. 25.

In conclusion, we must observe how, in all his undertaking for Jerusalem, Nehemiah prospered. In fifty and two days of incessant labour, 'the wall was finished;' and when his enemies and the heathen heard thereof, 'they were much cast down in their own eyes, for they perceived that the work was wrought of God.' Success, indeed, is not always a proof of the blessing of God, neither is disappointment always a proof of his anger. 'Whom the

Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.' Still, in the general course of events, 'godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' They that undertake great things for the glory of the Lord, shall do great things by the help of the Lord.

PRAYER.

Grant, O God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may learn by the example of other times. To-day give us grace to hear thy voice. To-day prevent us from hardening our hearts, as in the provocation, in the temptation in the wilderness, when the fathers of Israel tempted thee, and proved thee, and saw thy workings forty years. Preserve us, O Father, from their evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. Make us, in thy mercy, partakers of Christ, and enable us to hold our confidence stedfast unto the end. Lord, let the example of Israel serve both as warning and encouragement to all thy Gentile churches. Let us be warned by thy breaking off of the natural branches, lest we also should be broken off through any self-righteousness or unbelief. Let us be encouraged, also, by their example; for they never did return and seek thy face in vain. Thou didst never leave them without a type of Jesus, the spiritual Saviour; but didst raise up Moses to deliver them from bondage; didst raise up David to deliver them from persecution; didst raise up Nehemiah to deliver them from captivity; and didst raise up prophets to deliver them from blindness. Even so, Lord, do to us of the Gentiles, whom thou hast called in thy mercy. From the bondage of sin and satan; from the persecutions of antichrist; from the captivity of the world, whether in its fear or love; and from the errors and revilings of heresy and infidelity, good Lord, deliver us. Raise up in thy churches every where men that know, and love, and are valiant for thy truth upon the earth; and bring, by thy mighty Spirit, the thoughts of all men into the captivity of Christ. Let the kings of the world be wise. Let the judges of the earth be taught. And mercifully, O Lord, teach the rulers of this long favoured land how much they owe to thee, how deeply they are accountable to thee. Loudly and effectually call to the remembrance of thy churches in these lands, all that thou didst do for their fathers in days of old; from what bondage they were delivered; with what light they were enlightened; with what privileges they were endowed; with what liberty of Christ they were made free. Humble us, their children, for our neglects and backslidings. Heal us graciously, and love us freely, so shall we ren-

der to thee sacrifices of prayer and of praise. Be our guide, O Lord, in all our temporal affairs. Thy blessing alone maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow. Let all who are engaged in the merchandise of this world remember the merchandise that is better than gold, and the gain that is better than much fine gold. Let all that are engaged in the husbandry of the field remember the danger of the way-side, and the stony ground, and the thorns, and acknowledge that the Lord of the harvest is coming, and expecting of his seed, from some thirty, and from some sixty, and from some an hundred fold. Lord, make us fruitful in every good word and work. Strengthen our hands for every duty. Encourage our hearts that we may fear no evil, and in all things make us conquerors, yea, more than conquerors, through him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. To whom, with thee, O Father, and the eternal Spirit, be all glory, dominion, and power. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIV.

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS I.

REMARKS.

Our Saviour's personal ministry, and that of his apostles, before his resurrection, were exclusively employed in search of 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' (Matt. x. 5, 6.) And if there appear an exception in the case of the Gentile centurion, (Luke vii. 1—9.) and of the woman of Canaan, (Mat. xv. 20—28.) still are these but such special exceptions as serve to confirm the general rule. But when our Lord, by his death, had 'broken down the middle wall of partition' between Jews and Gentiles, 'for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;' then it pleased him first to extend the general commission of his apostles 'to all nations,' and afterwards miraculously to convert, and specially to appoint Paul 'a chosen vessel to bear his name before the Gentiles.' This unlimited extension of the 'covenants of promise,' prepared for the greatest moral revolution that had ever taken place since the foundation of the world. It required the destruction of the deep rooted prejudices of the Jews against the Gentiles, and of the frowning contempt with which the Gentiles regarded the Jews. It required the total abandonment of Jewish self-righteousness, and the total overturning of heathen idolatry. The work was truly great, whether we consider the difficulties to be surmounted, or the blessings to be secured. And never, in the history of providence, did God raise up any one more evidently fitted for his peculiar work than was Paul. He was a man, by education, full of prejudices against the heathens, and of zeal against the Christians. But when the

Spirit of Christ had plucked those prejudices out of his own heart, he was just thereby fitted for plucking similar prejudices from the hearts of others; and when the light of the knowledge of Christ shined on his darkness, the zeal that had formerly led him to injure others, now constrained him to sacrifice himself for their sakes. But the peculiar fitness of Paul for the apostleship of the Gentiles, is to be seen when we consider him as a writer and traveller. As a writer he was qualified to meet the Jew on the floor of scripture; or the Gentile in the school of his philosophy. As a traveller, and close observer of outward manners, he had looked quite into the hearts of men. He drew his pictures of human life not from fancy, but reality; and, whilst he silenced the Jew by an appeal to the scriptures he had studied, he rendered inexcusable the Gentile, by an appeal to the world he had visited. We find him accordingly, as a Christian traveller, referring to the joyful report he had heard of the faith of the believers at Rome, circulated 'throughout the whole world,' and he earnestly expresses his desire, and offers up his prayer, that he may be enabled to visit them. Here we see the true spirit and duty of a Christian traveller, whether in our own, or in a foreign land—not merely to see and admire the stupendous works of nature, or the curiosities of art, but to 'impart, and have imparted, in return, some spiritual gift' for mutual comfort and edification. O! that all who travel for learning, for health, for business, or, as it is called, for pleasure, would, like Paul, travel with Christ in their hearts, in their lips, and in their lives! But, alas! do not men, in society, often seem ashamed to speak a word of, or for, Christ? A man may justly be ashamed of his own defects; but no true believer should ever be ashamed of the gospel. The possession of power is not the cause of shame; and the gospel is the very 'power of God to salvation.' The possession of glorious raiment is not the cause of shame; and the gospel reveals 'the righteousness of God,' 'which is by faith of Jesus Christ, (as a gift) unto all, and, (as a garment) upon all who believe.' But whilst the gospel thus attracts by grace, it reveals also 'the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who bridle in the truth in unrighteousness.' And here Paul's extended, yet minute, observation of the heathen, warrants him to charge them with guilt, and to warn them of the wrath to come; a warning of the future almost anticipated by the present, when God is seen to 'give men up' to their own ways, or 'give them over' to their own thoughts. God hath, undoubtedly, 'prepared everlasting punishment' for wicked men, and wicked angels; but were he never to inflict such judgment, sinners would punish themselves. Conscience, like Judas, may, for a while, be bribed by the love of gain; and vain imaginations may so darken the foolish heart, that it cannot or will not see its danger; but, there is a 'certain fearful looking for of judgment,' from which the sinner can never wholly escape, unless he flee to that 'blood of sprinkling which cleanseth from all sin.'

PRAYER.

O God and Father, how great and how pre-

cious have ever been thy promises of a Saviour; thy promises now fulfilled in Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. Let thy mercy and thy peace come down upon us through him, and let us know that we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the richness of thy grace. Let us never forget, that there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we can be saved. And, blessed be thy name, O God, Jesus is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto the Father by him, seeing that he, who once died for us, dieth no more, but now ever liveth to make intercession for us. O Saviour, intercede for us, who are, by nature, miserable sinners: and, resting all our own hopes upon thy intercession for us, O! give us grace humbly and earnestly to intercede for others. Lord, look in mercy, upon thine ancient people, the Jews. O! remember the covenant which thou didst well order in all things with faithful Abraham. And, O God of all grace, who didst give thy Son Jesus a light to lighten the Gentiles, let him, as the Sun of righteousness, arise upon a darkened world with healing in his wings. The dark places of the earth are still full of the habitations of horrid cruelty: Father of lights, send forth upon them the light of thy Spirit, and stretch out over them the sceptre of the Prince of peace. Let the nations that still sit in darkness, see great light; and upon them that sit in the valley of the shadow of death, send light and life from the Lord. Arouse thoughtless sinners by the voice of thy coming judgment; draw humble believers by the power of thy tender mercies. Produce in all thy churches that hunger and thirst after righteousness, to which alone our Lord has promised the bread and the water of life. Take away, O Lord, from them all false doctrine, and heresy, and schism. Restore thy word where it has been made void by traditions of men; and let the churches that have apostatized to many mediators, return to the one Mediator between God and man. Warn, in thy mercy, all unfaithful churches; and if they will not be warned, and if they will not repent, yet lead thy people out of them, that they may not partake of their plagues. Remember these lands in mercy; and graciously bless all ranks and conditions of the people. Let them that rule, rule in thy fear; let them that are ruled inherit prosperity and peace. Give grace to those that are in health to use and not abuse their mercy: give grace to

those that are in sickness to hear the voice of the rod, and him that hath appointed it. Think, in mercy, O Lord, upon all the children of poverty and sorrow: upon all who are dreading or weeping over their sad bereavements: upon all who are in any danger by sea or by land: think upon them all, and upon us, O Lord, in thy mercy, and for thy great goodness in Christ Jesus, to whom, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, be glory in the churches for ever and ever. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXVI.

SCRIPTURE—NEHEMIAH VIII.

REMARKS.

Several facts are recorded in this chapter, very illustrative of the work of the Spirit in a time of reformation, and they may be applied either for direction to the church at large, or for the edification of the individual believer. 1. Ver. 1, 2. The people assembled to hear the word of God, of every class, and rank, and sex, and age. The scriptures have ever been a principal instrument, in the hand of the Spirit, in both beginning and promoting reformation; and all who seek a better state of things, either in themselves or others, must diligently use them for this purpose. 2. Ver. 3. The scriptures were read from morning until mid-day, a period of six hours. They, whose hearts are engaged, do not speedily grow weary of religious exercises, and the more they hear in this frame of mind, the more they desire to hear. 3. Ver. 4—6. The reading of the scriptures was accompanied with prayer and other devotional exercises. It should never be forgotten, that hearing the word is a part of divine worship; and it is when the scriptures are read or heard in the spirit of prayer and devotion, we may hope the Spirit will enable us to understand them, opening our eyes to behold the wonders of God's law, and enabling us to derive profit from them for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. 4. Ver. 7, 8. The scriptures were expounded. This, also, is of divine appointment, and has the promise of the divine blessing. He who expounds should speak with all plainness; and they who hear should do so with simplicity. 5. Ver. 9—12. When the word was read, the people wept, but were exhorted to rejoice. Still the word is productive of various emotions in the soul. It is well when the first is sorrow, under a discovery and sense of sin. But this is the sure way to peace. They who sow in tears shall reap in joy. Godly sorrow for sin is not incompatible with the sweet enjoyment of providential favours. 6. Ver. 13—17. What the word was found to command, the people instantly and cheerfully performed. Let us be doers of the word, and not hearers only. Thus in obeying the will, we shall enjoy the favour

of God; and a sense of that favour will again quicken our obedience, for 'the joy of the Lord is our strength.'

PRAYER.

Almighty God, do thou cause thy word to dwell in us richly, in all wisdom and understanding. Enable us to say, from the experience of its power in the hand of the Spirit, The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, much fine gold; sweeter, also, than honey, and the honey comb. Grant, O Lord, that by the study and knowledge of the scriptures, we may be warned, and fear to sin against thee. May we ever find, that, by obeying their commands, we enjoy a great reward. May they lead us to understand our errors. May they cleanse us from the secret faults of which no eye takes cognizance but thine; especially may they restrain us from presumptuous sin, nor permit us to live under the dominion of any transgression. Above all, may we, by the scriptures, attain to enlarged, enlightened, believing, and sanctified views of the Lord Jesus Christ. May we apprehend the glory of his person, the grace of his office, the perfection of his work, the richness of his promises, and the beauty of his example. May the Holy Spirit thus cause us to trust in him, and conform us to him. May we be quickened into zeal for his cause. May we be honoured to bear a part in it, and see our efforts crowned with success. May the word have free course and be glorified, until the kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. To this glorious end, do thou condescend to acknowledge the various means employed by the church in our times, so far as these are agreeable to thy holy will. May the preached gospel be effectual, as of old, when many sinners were convinced and converted. Thou, who art the Lord of the harvest, do thou thrust out labourers into the harvest; and thou, who hast the hearts of all in thine hand, do thou move the people to desire, and hear, and receive thy truth. May the labours of bible societies be blessed, until thy holy word shall be found in every hand. May the various missionary societies be directed, and honoured, and blessed, by thy Spirit, so that, wherever the word is spoken, it may be accompanied with the de-

monstration of his presence and power. May our schools be the means of gathering the lambs of Christ's fold. May the unwearied instructions of the domestic circle receive the countenance of the God of all the families of the earth. May the secret devotion of the closet be earnest, and spiritual, and acceptable. May the sighs of the men that cry for the defection of the church, and the sins of the world, prevail, through the intercession of the great High Priest. May his arm control, and direct, and overrule the counsels of princes, and the government of nations. May our own beloved land be prospered in all its interests; and especially from it may the word of the Lord sound out into all nations. Replenish the mind of our sovereign with heavenly wisdom. May counsellors be taught of God. May the magistracy acknowledge the supremacy of Christ, and rule for him. May all say before him, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory. What we ask is for his sake; and now, by his worthiness and intercession, let the words of our mouth, and the meditations of our heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

FRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLVI.

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS II.

REMARKS.

It appears to be the design of this chapter to convince the Jew of sin, and, under the character of a Jew, any formal but insincere professor of religion. With this view the principles of the divine administration are comprehensively stated. Ver. 1—16. A searching appeal is made to the conscience and life of the Jew. Ver. 17—24. And he is warned against resting in the mere ceremonies of his religion, while their real design and advantage are stated and allowed. Ver. 25—29. The principles of the divine judgment are such as to embrace all men. They may be comprehended under the following: That which is condemnatory in one man, must be so in all others; and since the Jews were guilty of the same sins as the heathen, both were alike condemned. Ver. 1. God will judge according to the real state of the character; and in his account there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile. Ver. 2. The special favour of God toward the Jew is no reason why his judgment of him should be relaxed, but rather formed an aggravation of his sinfulness. Ver. 3—5. The works of men, and not their external relations to God, would be taken into account in the divine judgment. Ver. 6—11. The rule of judgment with each would be the light which he enjoyed; to the Jew, the written law; and to the Gentile, the

same law written upon his conscience. Ver. 12—15. By these principles would all men at last be judged, and, it is plain, by them would all be condemned, unless some special provision were made by which the sinner might be pardoned, and the principles of the divine government maintained inviolate. Such a provision neither Jew nor Gentile could find, save in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. To impress these principles on the heart of the Jew, he is addressed pointedly and personally. Ver. 17—24. He is shown that his law, his knowledge, all his advantages, would avail him nothing if found living in those sins for which others were condemned, and uninterested in the provision of divine grace for deliverance from them. On the principles of eternal justice, neither he nor any other sinner could escape, except by the one way of the divine appointment. And in conclusion he is reminded, that the very rite which was the sign and seal of all his privileges, was in itself nothing—could not save him—was designed merely to instruct him in the way of salvation, so that he who submitted to it, but did not embrace that way of salvation, must perish; while he who embraced that salvation, although he did not observe the rite, would be accepted with God. In short, this is the law of the house of God, 'he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.'

PRAYER.

Wherewith shall we come before thee, O Lord, or bow ourselves before the high God? We are altogether unworthy to appear in thy presence. Our own hearts condemn us; but thou art greater than our hearts, and knowest all things. God be merciful to us sinners. The high privileges with which we have been favoured, have been an aggravation of our offence. Thou hast given us light, and we have walked in darkness. Thou hast called us by thy word, and we have refused to come unto thee. Thou hast supplied us with ordinances, and we have lightly esteemed them. Thou hast blessed us with thy sabbaths, and we have accounted them a weariness. O God, we bless thee that thou hast not removed us from forfeited privileges, nor withdrawn thy tender mercies from us. Still are we favoured with the word of God and prayer. O Lord, enable us now to estimate these, and profit by them. May the Holy Spirit shine on the page of revelation, so that we shall be enabled to read the truth recorded there. May we truly be convinced of sin, and enter fully into the inspired account of our own hearts, as deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Help us to feel and own that we are perishing sinners; but, O Lord, abandon us not to despair. May he who commanded the light to shine out of dark-

ness, shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. O may we apprehend how thou art just in justifying the ungodly. May we thus be encouraged to trust in thee. Show us, Lord, that the more we confide in thee, the more we honour thee. And O may our contemplation of thy name, as our God and Saviour, exercise a sanctifying power over our heart and life. Enable us to say, The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again. Grant that, through the riches of the divine grace, we may be enabled to cultivate the graces of pure and undefiled religion, adding to our faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge, and to knowledge, temperance, and to temperance, patience, and to patience, godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity. Lord, suffer us not to be any longer barren of good works. May we be conformed to the example of Jesus, who went about doing good. And may others enjoy the rich blessings of providence and grace with which we are favoured. Compassionate the poor, O Lord; supply their need, and sanctify their sorrows. Do thou instruct the ignorant, and fill their minds with the light of truth. Tenderly visit the sick and afflicted, and make thou their bed in their sorrow, and let their sufferings be an ordinance for their edification. O Lord, strengthen the tempted; decide the wavering; reclaim the wanderer; restore the backsliding, for thy name's sake; spare useful lives; and in mercy prepare the dying for death. With ourselves, we commend to thee thy people and cause in every place. May thy kingdom come, and be established, until thy will shall be done on earth even as it is in heaven. Sustain the hearts of those who are bearing the burthen and heat of the day, whether at home or abroad. May they see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in their hands. And O let the happy period come, when Jesus shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. All we ask is in his name; and unto the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be equal and undivided praise, now, henceforth, and for ever. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XX.

SCRIPTURE—NEHEMIAH IX.

REMARKS.

We learn from this chapter how to wait upon God, both collectively and individually. That prayer which is acceptable and prevalent through Jesus Christ, is presented to us in its accompaniments and more direct exercises. First, its accompaniments. 1. Humiliation, ver. 1. When we wait upon God, it must be as sinners, and with such outward expressions of both language and deportment, as shall manifest a deep sense of our sinfulness. 2. Purification, ver. 2. The sins which we have discovered must be put away, otherwise we expose ourselves to the charge of presumption and hypocrisy. 3. Confession, ver. 2. Our own sins, and the sins of all with whom we are connected, whether in the family, the church, or the world, must be poured out without reservation or extenuation. Second, the more direct exercises of prayer, ver. 3—5. To these we must address ourselves with earnestness, and call upon others to do the same. As a foundation for prayer, and our direction in it, we should call to mind the dealings of God towards ourselves and the church generally, taking care that we are hereby moved to suitable and corresponding exercises, ver. 6—38. Thus, if we still pray in the Spirit, we shall find our souls constrained to adore the being, perfections, and works of God, ver. 6. Especially shall we be captivated with believing views of him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom he is gracious to his chosen, ver. 7. And O, how will our souls be stirred up to bless his name for all his gracious dealings, especially when these are contemplated in connection with the ingratitude and worthlessness of his people. He gave them exceeding great and precious promises, ver. 8; he sympathized with their sorrows, ver. 9; he overthrew their enemies, ver. 10, 11; guided them miraculously, ver. 12; taught them, ver. 13, 14; and fed them, ver. 15. Yet were they ungrateful, and hardened their hearts against him, refusing obedience, forsaking his service, and even turning unto idols, ver. 16—18. But he forsook them not, ver. 19. He strove with them by his good Spirit, ver. 20; bore with them mercifully, ver. 21; enlarged their borders, ver. 22; increased their numbers, ver. 23; and made them victorious, ver. 24, 25. When his mercies availed not to constrain them, he tried them with his judgments; and when under these, they humbled themselves, he received them graciously, ver. 26—30. Nay, when neither mercies nor judgments availed, out of his own sovereign love, and for his name's sake, he preserved them, ver. 31. Well might the review of such a history encourage his servants to wait upon him with prayer and supplication. He did encourage them, and in their extremity they called upon his name. They adored his being, pleaded his covenant, and deprecated his righteous displeasure, ver. 32. They acknowledged his justice, and confessed their sins, ver. 33—35. They declared his claims upon them, dedicated themselves to him, and bound themselves

in a covenant not to be broken, ver. 36—38. Surely such a record is not in vain. It well becometh us, through faith and comfort of the scriptures, to exercise hope in God.

PRAYER.

Lord, teach us to pray. We know not what to pray for as we ought; but it is written, The Spirit helpeth our infirmities; he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. O send forth thy light and thy truth; let them lead and guide us; then shall we go unto the altar of God, unto God our exceeding joy. Lord, what is man! a sinner from the beginning hitherto; a sinner by nature; a sinner still, though even renewed by thine own sanctifying grace. O Lord, we confess our sinfulness, that our hearts are depraved, and our lives unholy. We confess the sins of all men; and especially do we humble ourselves for the sins of thy people. O may the record of their history, mercifully preserved in the scriptures, be profitable to us. Help us to discover the beginnings of sin in them, and to avoid the same. May we be alarmed by the awful consequences to which their sins exposed themselves and others, and not therein follow their example. May we stand by faith. Never suffer us to be high-minded; but may we fear always. May our confidence in thee be cherished by believing views of the grace manifested in them, and toward them. While we behold the readiness to forgive, may we be induced to come to thee with our confessions and prayers. While we see that thy good Spirit was not withheld, notwithstanding their rebellions, may we be encouraged to seek this precious gift. And O suffer us not to rest short of the sure and certain consciousness that he abideth in us. May we not grieve him by our sins, nor quench him by our neglect. May we enjoy the communion of the Spirit. May our souls be filled with his light, quickened by his power, and comforted by his grace. By his agency may we be qualified for any duty, and made faithful and successful in it. Enable us to study our own personal godliness; and may we maintain the exercises of self-denial, and attain to the heavenly art of self-government. Do thou control every thought, suggest every word, and direct every action. In the family, may we cultivate the graces that adorn it in all kindness, and condescension, and love. May we be faithful and consistent members of the church, maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and striving together for the faith of the gospel. And in our intercourse with the world, forbid, Lord, that we should ever give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. May the fruit

of the Spirit abound in us and others, even love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. We are thine, O Lord. We acknowledge thy claim upon us. In Jesus we devote ourselves to thee. Hear, Lord, and answer in peace. And do thou accept of us in our person and service, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIV.

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS III.

REMARKS.

Having answered several objections of the cavilling Jew, to the conclusion that he, equally with the Gentile, was guilty before God, ver. 1—8, the apostle here declares the sinner's disease, ver. 9—20, and the sinner's remedy, ver. 21—31. The objector having urged that, on the admission of the guilt of Israel, the case of the Jew was no better than that of the Gentile; that the favour of God toward his nation was no benefit to him, and that even the justice of God could not be cleared; the apostle asserted the high privileges of the Jew, the faithfulness of God, and his unspotted righteousness. He sweeps away every ground of cavil, and comes irresistibly to the conclusion of man's universal guilt and condemnation. This conclusion is expressed almost entirely in language taken from the Old Testament scriptures, that it might be the more readily acknowledged and forcibly felt. And O, what a conclusion! All men are guilty, and every man is altogether depraved. All are guilty; every one a violator of the law; no exception; Jew and Gentile alike before God; our mouth stopped; the whole world condemned before God; every man is altogether sinful; the understanding darkened by sin; God, in consequence, not sought after as the great end of his being; every one on some crooked path; no one serving and honouring God; none doing good to his neighbour; the throat a channel for every impure utterance; the tongue filled with lying; the lips pouring forth the poison of evil passion; the mouth full of profanity; the feet ready to mischief; their ways injurious; peace unknown; and God not honoured. Lord, what is man! And this is true of every man. This is human nature left to itself. Is there no hope of mercy? Yes, blessed be God, there is an abundant provision. The disease is thus described at length, that we may learn to estimate the remedy. O what a remedy! These are its prominent features: Without the law—purely of grace, not merit. Witnessed by the law and the prophets—the grand subject of revelation. The righteousness of God, appointed, furnished, approved by God. By faith—his is the hand that takes it. Justifies God—makes the forgiveness and acceptance of the sinner honourable to the divine justice. It humbles the sinner, glorifies the Saviour, and magnifies the law. Yea,

this is its principle, 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.' By sin every man is ruined; but in Christ is the hope of the believer secured.

PRAYER.

Our Father who art in heaven, we are encouraged, by thy tender mercies, to draw nigh unto thee. Justly mightest thou have cast us off for ever; but when we had destroyed ourselves, in thee was our help found. O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Our fall, O God, has magnified the riches of thy grace; our ruin has displayed thy wisdom; and our helplessness has exalted thy power. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth thine iniquities, healeth thy diseases, redeemeth thy life from destruction, crowneth them with loving-kindness and tender mercy. O Lord, do thou reveal thyself to us in Jesus Christ. May we see thy divine perfection, gloriously harmonizing in him, to accomplish the redemption of sinners. May we thus be restored to confidence in thee. May we be constrained to love thee. May we feel the force of the heavenly remonstrance, Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God with your body and spirit, which are his. Never suffer us to doubt thy faithfulness and truth. Keep us waiting upon thee at all times, that we may receive out of thy fullness; and may we have holy boldness to plead with thee, and to say, in faith, Do as thou hast said. Fill our understanding, O God, with light. Reclaim us from every crooked way. May we be found ever in the path of righteousness. Suffer us to be no longer unprofitable servants. May we learn to go about doing good. May our lips be without guile, our mouth filled with praise, our feet ready to go on errands of mercy. May our ways be approved of thee, and be thou ever our fear and dread. Lord, we are thine, all we are, and all we have. May we be enabled to present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, and count it a reasonable service, being constrained by the mercies of God. Suffer us not to be conformed to this world; but may we be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and in thy service may we know thy will to be good, acceptable, and perfect. We lay ourselves upon thine altar; accept the offering, O Lord, through the worthiness and intercession of Jesus Christ. Guide us by thy counsel while we live, and afterwards receive us to glory. Prepare us for all thy pur-

poses; and grant that having served thee on earth, we may be admitted to the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, to the only wise God and our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXVI. 3.

SCRIPTURE—NEHEMIAH XIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Eliashib the priest, who had oversight of the chamber of the house of the Lord, having impiously formed an alliance with Tobiah an Ammonite, and an inveterate enemy of the Jewish nation, had sacrilegiously 'prepared' for him, within the courts of the house of the Lord, a great chamber, formerly occupied as a storeroom for frankincense, meat-offerings, and vessels.

In Num. xviii. 1, we find it recorded, that God had appointed the Levites to serve in the sanctuary in place of the people, and for their maintenance and support ordained that they should receive a tenth of the wine, the corn, and the oil. These tithes appear to have been deposited in treasuries as they were brought in by the people, and to have been distributed to the officiating Levites according to their necessities, that they might minister before the Lord without distraction of mind; and in the periods of Israel's faithfulness and prosperity, the treasuries were always well filled. But such appears to have been the infidelity and selfishness of the returned captives, that although the hand of the Lord was signally manifested in their restoration to their own country and to liberty, they had wholly neglected to bring in these tenths or tithes, and the Levites were consequently compelled to flee, every man to his own field, to provide for himself (ver. 10.), and the sanctuary was consequently neglected. The sanctification of the sabbath, or seventh day of the week, was one of God's most important and distinguished ordinances in Israel. It was honoured by the example of God himself (Gen. ii. 3.); and in the days of Moses (Num. xv. 32.) an individual violation of it had been, by God's special direction, capitally punished; yet, from verses 15 and 16, it appears that the returned captives scrupled not to do all kinds of servile work, and to transact all manner of mercantile business upon that holy day.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. How obvious is it that God views and judges mankind in a collective capacity as nations! The sin of the Ammonites and Moabites towards Israel was probably only the act of their rulers, and many thousands of the people may have been ignorant of it, and yet the whole nation were, on that account, excluded from entering into the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation. How clearly, then, is it our duty to pray for our governors, that

they may be counselled from on high, and that under their wise and godly government we may lead peaceful and happy lives!

2. What a fearful thing is it to apostatize from God, or sin against him! and how difficult is it to return to our duty and his favour! The iniquity of Israel occasioned their captivity, and all the bitterness of bondage was not sufficient to reform them. When restored to their own lands, they returned to the very sins that had occasioned their banishment from it. What reason have we to guard against the beginnings of sin, and to pray continually, 'lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!'

3. How manifest is it, that we cannot possibly serve God with fidelity, and be in alliance with his enemies! Such is their enmity to God, that even selfish interest will not induce them to give up their opposition to his law.

4. What a dangerous thing is it to be yoked in marriage with unbelievers! The priest, from whose lips the people should learn the law, when married to the daughter of a stranger, so far forgets that law, as to profane the courts of God's house for the accommodation of a man whose nation was excluded from the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation! How careful should we be not to intermarry with the enemies of God!

PRAYER.

O Lord God Almighty, thou art the God of the universe. Thou hast made of one blood all nations of men that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. Thou didst create man for thyself, but he departed from thee. Thou didst make him upright, but he sought out many inventions. We lament before thee this morning, that in every age and country men have sinned against thee. The nations have forsaken thee. They have shown that they did not like to retain thee in their knowledge, or glorify thee as God. Professing themselves to be wise, they have become fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and beasts, and creeping things. Most merciful God, thou hast promised the heathen to Christ as an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth as a possession. O fulfil this promise, we do this morning most humbly, but earnestly, beseech thee. Pour out floods of light and knowledge upon all nations, that all men may know the truth as it is in Jesus. Cause the Ammonite, the Moabite, the Egyptian, and every tribe and people, to enter into the congregation of the Lord in the present generation. Remove from the Israelite the vail that prevents him from seeing Christ in Moses and the prophets, and enable him savingly to see Jesus whom his blinded ancestors pierced. Bring back the apostasy of Christianity, and put an end to the man of sin. Take away all refuges of lies

from the human family, and place them all upon the Rock of ages. As there is but one shepherd, let there be but one sheep-fold; and may all men, of every clime and colour, by the possession of like precious faith, be blessed with faithful Abraham. We thank thee for the rest of the past night, and for the safety, health, and privileges of this morning. Lord, sanctify to us thy providential goodness. Enable us to estimate it justly, to feel it constantly, and to bless thee for it perpetually. Take us under thy most gracious care, and guide us by thy Spirit through the remainder of this day. As it is the last day of the week, may it admonish us of our latter end, and remind us, that ere long we shall arrive at the last day of our lives. O may we be prepared, at that day, to say we have fought a good fight, we have kept the faith, and we know that in Jesus there is laid up for us a crown of life. Bless, we beseech thee, O Lord, the land of our nativity. Bless the throne and sceptre with godliness, wisdom, and stability. Bless all authorities under the throne and over us. Bless all our friends in every place; may they be friends of God, and may they and we be one in Christ Jesus the Lord. Comfort, O Lord, the sick; enable them to be submissive to thy will; and may their prolonged lives be Christ Jesus the Lord, or death eternal gain. Comfort the poor under their privations; make them rich in faith; and enable them to see, that afflictions which are temporary are not worthy to be compared to the glory that awaits them. Pardon, O Lord, all our sins. Overlook the unworthiness of our appearance at this time before thee; and graciously accept of us and our feeble services, through Jesus Christ, the Lord our righteousness, and God over all, blessed now and for ever. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRaise—PSALM XXXII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS IV.

REMARKS.

In the preceding chapter the apostle had proved, by quotations from the 14th Psalm and other portions of the Old Testament scriptures, that of the Jews as well as of the Gentiles, there were none righteous, 'no not one;' and that, consequently, 'by the deeds of the law, there could no flesh living be justified in God's sight.' In this chapter he proceeds to show, that Abraham, although honoured by the title of 'the friend of God,' was no exception to this rule. Abraham, he admits, was declared to be right-

eous; but this righteousness he did not possess by works done in the flesh, or performed personally by himself; but he acquired it by a faith, or belief, in the Spirit, and by the righteousness of another, to him graciously and freely imputed. The apostle proves this point by a quotation from the book of Genesis (chap. xv. 6.), where it is expressly stated, that Abraham 'believed in the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness.' It is important to observe, that the statement is not he believed *the* Lord, and it was counted, &c.; but, he believed *in* the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness. To believe the truth of a statement made by another, is an acknowledgment of the veracity, and consequently righteousness, of that other person; but while it may be an act of candour upon the part of the person believing, and may prove him to be ingenuous, it can by no means constitute him righteous. To believe what the Lord says, whatever be the subject of his statement, is to do honour and justice to Jehovah's character; but, except in so far as the act of believing goes, it cannot show the person believing to be just or righteous.

Had Abraham believed merely the promise given by the Lord, that his seed should be multitudinous, and should inherit the land wherein he was a stranger, it would have been an acknowledgment of God's power and faithfulness, but could not have removed Abraham's sinful imperfections, and constituted him righteous. Very different, however, is the case, when Abraham believed *in* the Lord. Abraham believed not merely the thing stated, but he believed in 'the seed of the woman,' the substance of the thing stated; as 'the Lord his righteousness,' and this belief, not merely in the veracity of the speaker, but in the person spoken of, was counted to him *for* righteousness. The law of God was to Abraham, as it is to every son of Adam, like a bond, and every violation of it became, like a debt, recorded against him in the court of heaven. When, therefore, he heard, and believed that Jehovah, his Redeemer, had undertaken to pay that debt, and cancel that bond, he felt himself in a condition satisfactorily to meet his heavenly creditor. Or in other words, his belief in the Lord his righteousness, constituted him righteous. That this is the mind of the Spirit, in the passage, is beyond all controversy, because in the Gospel according to John (viii. 56.), our Lord tells the Jews, that their father Abraham 'rejoiced to see his day, and he saw it and was glad;' and in the third chapter of the epistle to the Galatians (ver. 16.), the apostle expressly tells us, that the seed, in the coming of which Abraham believed, was Christ. Now as Abraham lived so many thousand years before the actual appearance of our Lord, the sight which he saw of his day must have been by faith; and as the apostle assures us, that 'the seed,' in whom all nations and families on earth were to be blessed, was the Christ, it is clear to a demonstration, that when Abraham believed in 'the Lord,' it was in a coming Lord; and what was counted to him for righteousness, was 'the doing' and 'dying' of that Lord in the fulfilment of love, and satisfaction of justice on his behalf. The same important truth, viz., that no man can be justified before God by the deeds of the law, the apostle further illustrates

by the case of David, who, in the thirty-second Psalm, ascribes blessedness not to the man who had never committed sin, because no such man is to be found in Adam's fallen family, but to the man whose iniquities are pardoned, to whom the Lord imputeth not his sin, but to whom he imputeth righteousness without works. In the remainder of the chapter, from ver. 10, the apostle establishes two things: 1. That the circumcision of Abraham, though performed in obedience to God's commandment, was not the cause of his justification, because he had been declared righteous by 'believing in the Lord' a considerable time previous to the institution of circumcision; and, 2. That as he was by promise to be the father of many nations, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, do, by possessing 'like precious faith,' become the children of faithful Abraham, and shall be joined with him in the blessedness of those to whom God imputeth righteousness without works.

PRAYER.

Our Father who art in heaven, we desire this evening to come before thee in the name of our all-prevailing and ever-living intercessor. Through him we would desire to thank thee, O Lord, for all the mercy and the truth which thou hast bestowed upon us all the days of our lives. Early were we cast upon thy care, and blessed be thy name, thou hast cared for us. Thy mercies have been new to us every morning, and repeated to us every passing moment. We desire especially to thank thee this evening for the goodness we have received at thy hand through the past day. We bless thee for all our comforts and enjoyments, personal and social. We praise thee, O Lord, that we have been continued in life, and brought in safety to the close of another week, and the approach of another sabbath. May we be enabled to dismiss all distracting cares of the world from our minds, and to be prepared for the sacred rest and heavenly privileges of that holy day. We bless thee for the high privilege we have this evening enjoyed, in reading in thy divine word those glorious things that belong to our everlasting peace. O enable us to greatly profit thereby. Enable us to feel that we cannot be justified in whole or in part by works of righteousness which we have done; that we cannot be blessed except by the imputation of righteousness without works. Bestow upon each of us the faith that constituted thy servant Abraham righteous. Give us grace to believe in Jehovah, our righteousness, to know personally and experimentally that he fulfilled for us the law—that he magnified and made it honourable—that upon him were laid all our sins—and that he abolished and made an end of them—that we cannot, therefore, come into condemnation, but in him have passed from

death unto life. Cause thy Spirit to witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God—that possessing like precious faith, we are the children of faithful Abraham, and heirs according to the promise. Bless, we this evening beseech thee, O Lord, all mankind. God of all consolation, comfort the sick; be a present help in their trouble. Greatly bless our native land, in the sovereign upon the throne, in all subordinate branches of the government, and in all subjects of every rank and condition. May the church be purified from all human inventions, and made gloriously triumphant over all her enemies. May she be enabled to put to silence all gainsayers of the truth; and may she speedily embrace within her pure communion all inhabitants of the land. Bless this night all our relatives and friends with every spiritual and soul-enriching blessing. Reward our benefactors. If we have enemies, we beseech thee to forgive them, and to enable us to forgive them also. We commit ourselves and our household this night to thy care. Refresh us with sleep as thou dost thy beloved. Forgive all our sins. Overlook our unworthiness. Receive us graciously, and bless us abundantly. And to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the adorable Jehovah of Israel, we would now and for ever, through the divine Redeemer, be found ascribing kingdom, power, and glory. Amen.

THIRTIETH WEEK. SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXVIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXXXVIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In the title of this psalm it is called 'Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite,' or a Psalm of Heman, intended to give instruction. (See 1 Kings iv. 31.) There are several statements in this psalm that cannot be rationally or satisfactorily interpreted or understood, except of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the first place, the description of deep suffering and affliction in the verses intermediate between the second and the tenth, applies much more appropriately to 'the man of sorrows,' than to any ordinary man. In the second place, the complaint in the eighth verse is a literal description of the manner in which our Lord was abandoned by his friends in the hour of his calamity, and beautifully harmonizes with another statement of the Psalmist, which we know, upon infallible authority, was intended for the Redeemer (see Psal. xli. 9, and John xiii. 18.) And in the third place, the questions which are put in verses 10, 11, and 12, respecting the state of the dead, are totally inconsistent with faith and piety in the mouth of a mere

man, but are singularly suitable to the official situation and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. An infidel or unbeliever in the soul's immortality, might appropriately put such questions; but every genuine believer knows, that death to him is real gain; that the spirit does not descend into the grave, but, in the moment of dissolution, returns to God who gave it being; and that, by the general assembly of the just made perfect, praise is constantly offered before the throne of God. The case was, however, different with the Christ. Had he remained under death's power—had it been possible that the Holy One of God should have seen corruption—had not the man, Christ Jesus, been supported and raised up from the dead by the eternal Spirit,—then all humanity must have for ever continued dead; no soul could have entered heaven; 'faith would have been vain;' nor could any of Adam's fallen family have ever offered praise to Jehovah; but all must have remained in their sins, and consequent misery. The psalm is throughout a prayer of the Christ, not personally in his own name, but officially as Mediator, and on behalf of himself and people. It is a supplication addressed to the Godhead for mediatorial support and deliverance, setting forth the sufferings of humanity, and showing, that should the mediatorial work not be carried into effect, the whole family of men would be eternally excluded from the service of praise.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. How mysterious and uncontrolled are the workings of Jehovah, and how inexhaustible his resources! He maketh the private incidents of individuals and families to shadow forth the stupendous mysteries of his grace.

2. How supremely important is the work of redemption! God from eternity decreed it; angels desire to look into it; and holy men were, in every age, inspired by heaven to reveal it. How beautifully does this illustrate the saying of the apostle addressed to believers, 'All things are yours,' &c., 1 Cor. iii. 21.

3. How incalculably great are our obligations to Christ! Had he not conquered death, and despoiled the grave, no child of Adam could have ever praised God.

4. What encouragement have we to bear affliction with patience and faith! In this, as in all other things, Christ has set us a perfect example. We know that if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. We know that through him all things work together for our good. We can go with holy boldness to God in affliction, for the Christ was before us in suffering, and he is eternally on the right hand of the throne in our name; and we can rest assured, that as He was triumphant over all enemies in his sufferings, so shall we through him. The light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared to the glory that awaits us.

PRAYER.

Most adorable Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, we desire, on this morning of thy holy sabbath, to draw near to thy throne of grace. We give thee our united and hearty

thanks for the Christian sabbath. We bless thee, that upon the morning of this day, our adorable Redeemer burst the bonds of death, and took away the victory of the grave. We rejoice that although he died for sin, he arose on this morning without sin, and to our justification; that this day is a memorial of sin destroyed, and eternal life brought gloriously to light. We thank thee for the rest we have enjoyed in sleep; that no evil has come upon us, nor any plague visited our dwelling. We acknowledge the measure of health we individually experience, and all the comforts by which we are surrounded, to be gifts of thy providence. Enable us to feel thy goodness deeply, and to remember it constantly throughout the day. Look down in great mercy, we beseech thee, this morning, upon the whole world. We entreat thee, O Lord, to bless especially thy church every where. May this be a great day in her assemblies. Pour out a spirit of prayer upon all families, and cause all individuals called by thy name to rejoice when it is said, Let us go to the house of God. Draw many to thyself this morning, and enable them to hold fellowship with the Father and with the Son Jesus Christ. Hear, Lord, the prayers of thy Jacob, and graciously answer the petitions of thy Israel. Make thy people willing in a day of thy power, and enable them to feel that it is good for them to draw near unto God. Bless the preachers of thy word; may they run joyfully, knowing that thou hast sent them. Endow them largely for their appointed work; and may their ministrations, this day, be powerful by thy grace. Suit thy word, we beseech thee, to the varied conditions of thy people, and may each individual receive a word in season. Be very merciful, this morning, to all that are in affliction, either of body or mind. Give patience to the sick. Enable them to see thy hand in their sickness, and to be silent, because the dispensation is thine. Comfort the mourner, support the feeble, and raise up the bowed down. May the restored to health among the afflicted praise thee on earth, and those passing through death magnify thy name in heaven. Bless, Lord, our rulers in this our native land. Enable them to remember, that they have been appointed by thee, and to thee must give account. O may they be in the spirit on this thy day, honouring thee by whom they have been exalted to rule; and may they be all prepared to reign as kings and priests with Christ in heaven. Bless all our dear friends in every place. We rejoice that thine eye is upon them all, however much their circumstances may lie hid from us. Lord, suit thy dispensations to their

eternal advantage, and prepare them all for thyself. Bountifully bless all our benefactors, and repay double to their souls their kindness to us. Enable us to forgive our enemies, as we trust that thou, for Christ's sake, wilt forgive us. Take us all under thy superintendence and direction through the day. May we be conducted by thy Spirit to the sanctuary, and feel that one day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere; and may such of us as are required to remain at home, be wholly engrossed by spiritual and eternal things. We commit ourselves individually to thee, our covenant God; and all we ask or expect, is not in ourselves, but solely in Christ Jesus; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, our adorable and eternal Jehovah, be kingdom, and power, and glory. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS LXXXIX. 1—27.

REMARKS.

This psalm, like the preceding, is entitled 'Maschil,' or a psalm to give instruction. It consisteth of two parts. In the first, there is a triumphant review of God's providence and faithfulness toward his church, and the many exceedingly great and precious promises which he had made to his servant David. In the second, there is an expostulation with God on account of the present depressed condition of David's family; but, however despondent may be the tone of some parts of this expostulation, that the author looked upon it only as a severe chastisement is manifest, because he concludes the whole psalm with thanksgiving and praise to God. The former part, with a portion of which, only, we are at present concerned, is singularly beautiful and encouraging. It commences with the author's resolution, expressed in the anticipation of faith, that he would ever sing to the praise of God's mercies. Jehovah's adorable perfections are celebrated by the different orders, and displayed in the different conditions, of his creatures. Sinless angels praise him for his holiness; unnumbered worlds show forth his power, wisdom, and goodness; the fallen angels are, in the abodes of punishment, manifestations of vindictive justice; but it is the high privilege of the redeemed children of Zion to begin, on earth in time, and continue in heaven through eternity, the song of the triumph of mercy. Although, however, mercy droppeth freely upon the children of redemption like the rain and dew of heaven, yet it is founded upon the basis of, or rather, issueth from the fountain of an everlasting covenant. Mercy in Jehovah is not the capricious result of sudden compassionate emotion, but the development of fixed and eternal purposes. The Psalmist, accordingly, connects mercy closely with God's faithfulness; and while, in the second verse,

he expresses an assurance, that mercy shall 'be built up for ever,' he adds, as a reason, that God's faithfulness shall be established in the heavens. The third and fourth verses are the commencement of a recital, or enumeration, of God's most gracious promises to David and his family; but as these promises, and the fulfilment of them, are illustrious manifestations of God's perfections, the author interrupts the enumeration by fourteen verses, in which he takes amplified notice of some of these perfections. In these verses (beginning with the fifth), he first speaks prophetically of the praise that in heaven, and among the saints, shall be offered up to God for the wonders of redeeming love, and for his faithfulness. He next shows, that God's love and faithfulness towards men is no encouragement for rash familiarity or presumption in their approaches to him. There is none in heaven to be compared to Jehovah, and, therefore, great fear, in meetings of his saints, is due unto his name. Verse eighth declares God's mightiness, manifested in the fulfilment of all his plans and purposes. This mightiness is then illustrated by his government of the sea, in putting it into motion, and stilling its waves at his pleasure. Probably there is here a reference to the Red sea, which, in so striking a manner, obeyed Jehovah's will in receding for the safety of the Israelites, and returning for the destruction of the Egyptians. This is the more likely, because the next verse speaks of Egypt under the name of Rahab. Verse eleventh, and the first clause of verse twelfth, illustrates God's greatness, by the creation and possession of the heavens and earth, the north and the south. Tabor and Hermon, spoken of in the latter clause of verse twelfth, were two mountains, the one on the west, and the other on the east, of the river Jordan; or the one within, and the other without, the land of Canaan. The one appears, accordingly, to signify the Jews, and the other the Gentiles; and the amount of all is, that the whole spiritual land of promise shall rejoice in God's name. The 'mighty arm,' in the thirteenth verse, is obviously God's arm in the gospel; and in the fourteenth verse, the character of this arm, or the nature of the gospel salvation, is beautifully described. Justice and judgment are said to be the habitation of God's throne, beyond the precincts of which it cannot exist. The law must be fulfilled, and justice must be satisfied, before mercy can be exercised; but when God's throne dwells in justice and judgment, through the mediation of Messiah, then mercy, accompanied by truth, goes before his face. The condition, character, privileges, and stability of those who are personally acquainted with the gospel salvation, are, with surpassing beauty, described, from verse fifteenth to the nineteenth; and then the enumeration of God's promises to David, broken of at verse fifth, is resumed. The substance, or chief of the promises, recited here, are historically recorded in 2 Sam. vii. 12, &c.; but although they apply to David in a subordinate sense, and as a type of Christ, they are literally true and appropriate, in all their parts, only in reference to Messiah.

PRAYER.

Almighty, all-glorious, and most merciful Je-

Jehovah, enable us, on this evening of thy holy Sabbath, to come, with all holy reverence and confidence, into thy most gracious presence. Enable us, this evening, to feel that we have come unto thee in thine own appointed way, and that we are accepted in the Beloved; that we are not seen in ourselves, in our native impurity and imperfections; but in the face of God our shield, the Lord our righteousness, and Captain of our salvation. Give us grace to rest in assured confidence, that we are justified freely by thy grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus; that thou hast set our feet upon the Rock of ages, and established there our goings. We unite, O Lord, in thanking and praising thee for all the privileges of the past day. We bless thee for its freedom from the cares and labours of the other days of the week; for its sacred rest and holy opportunities. Grant, Lord, that it may be greatly blessed, in its effects and consequences, to many souls. May there be many, this evening, in the family and closet, before thy throne, beseeching thee to follow, with much fruit to edification, the whole ordinances of the sanctuary on the past day; and hear, O Lord, their prayers, and cause the seed that has been sown in reading, hearing, and preaching thy word, to grow up richly, and bring forth abundantly, to the praise and glory of thy grace. We thank thee, heavenly Father, for the care and kindness we have experienced at thy hand through the whole day. We specially desire to bless thee, O Lord, for the gracious things we have this evening heard out of thy blessed word. O make it greatly profitable to us, and to all who have thy word in their possession. We beseech thee, O Jehovah, Lord of heaven and earth, to bless all mankind. Enlighten the darkened, reform the sinner, and build up the believer in his most holy faith. Bless all nations and kingdoms; may they soon be all blessed in the Seed of Abraham, and become kingdoms of God and of his Christ. Bless specially our native land. May the throne be established in righteousness, the church endowed with faithfulness, and the people clothed with holiness. Be a physician to the sick, a comforter to the mourner, a father to the fatherless, an husband to the widow, and a shield to the stranger. Bless with thy friendship our friends, reward with thy favour our benefactors, and subdue with thy grace our enemies. Forgive all our sins and shortcomings in duty through the day. Take us under thy protection through the night, and fit us for all the duties of the ensuing day. Hear, Lord, in heaven, thy dwelling-place, this our humble prayer, and give us an answer

of peace, seeing all that we ask is in Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE III. 1.

SCRIPTURE—JOB I. II.

REMARKS.

The book of Job is an historical poem, and perhaps the most ancient written record in existence. It has always been regarded by the Jews as an inspired book, and is quoted as such by the apostle Paul. That the character of Job is not fictitious is most evident from the fact, that he is referred to by name in other books of the Old and New Testaments, as in Ezek. xiv. 14. and James v. 11. From the last chapter of his book we learn that he lived to an age much greater than was usual in the time of Moses, and are therefore led to date back the period of his birth to the days of the ancient patriarchs. That he was a very great man is proved by the extent of his wealth and the number of his servants. That he was a very holy man is evinced by his fear of God, his hatred of sin, and his 'continual' observance of family worship. Yet was Job not without his enemies. One, long afterwards declared to be 'the accuser of the brethren,' full of envy because of his happiness, and of malignity because of his holiness, sought to accomplish his desolation in time, and his utter ruin in eternity. To an extent rarely if ever paralleled in the dark picture of human suffering, was this great and good man tried. For him the furnace was heated seven-fold; but out of that furnace he came like the gold purified seven times—his accuser defeated—his happiness secured—his triumph completed.

Let us learn from this portion how important the duty, and how sweet the privilege, of having a family altar at which we may, on our own behalf, and on behalf of those we love most on earth, pour forth our hearts in humble adoration, in earnest petition, in grateful thanksgiving. Such in patriarchal, prophetic, apostolic, and present times, has been the unvarying practice of God's saints when placed by him in charge of families.

Fearful is the threatening denounced by God against the man who, in the spirit of atheism, denying his providence, or disregarding his blessing, neglects *family* worship. When such is called to part with his children by death, as was Job; or when the summons is addressed to himself, and he is laid on that bed from which he shall be carried out to the silent tomb, how terrible must it be to look on the children whom he should have trained, by his teachings and prayers, for heaven; and to think that their best interests he has neglected; that they are now about to be cast on a cold, and dangerous, and defiling world; that for them he can do nothing now; and that with them he shall not meet again till standing before the dread tribunal of God. Let the parents who neglect Job's example, and have no altars

in their houses, tremble at the prospect. If, after the condemnation of the Judge, any thing in that day will be felt bitter, it will be the curses poured out on parents by neglected families.

In coming before God, let us rejoice that we have a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than any presented on the altar of Job. We can plead the sacrifice of God's own Son; and on that ground may we draw near to him in holy, humble, and child-like confidence, assured that our prayers, offered up through the mediation of our great high priest Jesus Christ, will be ever heard, and so far as may be consistent with our good and God's glory, certainly answered.

As in the days of old, so now the devil goeth to and fro in the earth, walking up and down in it, and having the same object in view, even to tempt and destroy the children of men. Having once been an angel of light, his knowledge must be extensive. His cunning has been matured by six thousand years' experience. His agents in the work of tempting have often, as in Job's case (chap. ii. 9.), been those who might be least suspected to take any part in such diabolical employment; hence the frequent success of 'his devices,' and the eternal ruin of his victims. Let us watch and pray lest we too fall into his snares and perish.

PRAYER.

Eternal God, thy throne is in the heavens, and before that throne angels and redeemed spirits ever bow, ascribing glory, and honour, and praise, unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever. We bless thee, Almighty God, that thou dost permit us the exalted privilege of raising an altar to thee in our dwelling. It is to us as the earnest of the peace and blessedness of heaven, when, as a family, we bow us down here, and, for a time forgetting the world and its anxieties, hold communion with thee the Father of our spirits. We confess, in deep humiliation of soul, how unworthy we are even to lift up our eyes to the place where thine honour dwelleth. In drawing near to a throne of grace, oft to thine eye has the depravity of our hearts been exhibited by the wandering of our thoughts, and the coldness of our affections, and the faintness of our desires. O Lord, we entreat that thou wilt now teach and enable us to wait on and worship thee in spirit and in truth. We draw near not in our own name or righteousness, for all our righteousnesses are but filthy rags. As guilty sinners we plead the sacrifice of Christ, and for his sake implore that all our sins may be for ever blotted out from the book of thy remembrance. As Job offered a sacrifice for each of his children, so would we implore that each member of this household may obtain favour in thy sight. May we all find acceptance in the Beloved, and, through faith in the promises, be found heirs of *grace here, and of glory hereafter.* O our Fa-

ther, if in accordance with thy will, we would pray thee to save us, and those beloved ones bowing with us, from fearful calamities, and from sudden death. We entreat thy continued protection against the wiles of the wicked one, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Suffer us not to be led into temptation, and when we are tempted, make a way for our escape. Forbid, O God, that satan should so far get the advantage as that any of this family should ever be instrumental in leading others from the path of duty and of safety. May we rather be enabled to cheer each other's hearts in the day of darkness; to strengthen each other's faith in the time of trial; to encourage each other in an humble submission to thy will, in the faithful discharge of every duty, and in persevering efforts to obtain a place in glory. And now, O God, grant that at whatever time we may, as a family, be broken up, and called to an eternal world, we may again meet there, each renewed in the image of our Lord, cleansed in his blood, clothed in his righteousness, and prepared to spend eternity together in celebrating his praise. And to thy name will we ever ascribe all glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI. 5—7.

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS V.

REMARKS.

In this chapter two remarkable persons are brought before us. The first is Adam, the head of the whole human family. By a gracious and divine appointment he entered into a covenant with God, not only for himself, but all his posterity. Being tempted of the devil, he broke that covenant, violated the law under which he was placed, and became subject to its penalty. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. The other extraordinary character referred to is Jesus Christ. When he saw the world in ruins, and man helpless and hopeless, he offered to become his surety and representative; and as the Head and Father of all the elect, entered into a covenant of grace for them. Hence he is said, in the fourteenth verse, to be typified by the first Adam; and in 1 Cor. xv. 45, he is expressly called 'the last Adam,' not because of a similarity in their *personal*, but in their *representative* character.

1. Each is head of a distinct family; the first Adam of the whole human race. Whatever distinctions may seem to exist between the nations of the earth, distinctions of colour, or constitution, or caste, or character, they are so trifling, and found affected so readily by a change of circumstances, that they cannot for a moment shake our thorough conviction, that God 'hath made of one blood all nations

of men; that all are directly sprung from one common root; that all are the children of one parent.

The last Adam, Christ, is head of all those whom he hath redeemed, and who will be regenerated from among men. They are those who are 'born again,' 'born from above.' In whatever land they live they regard it as a strange country, and look upward and onward to another and a better.

2. Each secures to his family certain results. Do we regard ourselves as children of the first Adam? Then, as such, we inherit from him guilt, the want of original righteousness, the corruption of our whole nature, death, and the pains of hell for ever. That we inherit guilt, that is, are obnoxious to punishment because of Adam's sin, is proved in the fifteenth and eighteenth verses; and in the fourteenth verse it is expressly declared, that even on those who had not committed *actual* sin, like Adam, punishment was *inflicted*. Infants have no actual sin, and when they suffer death it must be because of sin *imputed*. That we want original righteousness is evident from the sixth verse, where it is said we are 'without strength.' That our whole nature is depraved is manifest from the term applied to us in the tenth verse, 'enemies to God.' That in consequence of Adam's sin we are liable to death, is shown in the twelfth, fifteenth, and seventeenth verses; and that we are exposed to the pains of hell for ever is awfully clear in the twenty-first verse, where life and death are contrasted. The life is declared to be eternal, and that which is contrasted with it must, to have any point or meaning, be also eternal. Such, then, are the bitter fruits of Adam's fall, such the results secured to his family.

The last Adam, Christ, hath, by his obedience unto death, removed from off every member of his family this fearful curse, and not this alone, but all their own actual sins (sixteenth verse), and opened up a pathway by which each may, and will most certainly, ascend to a higher position amidst the sons of God, and stand in a nearer relationship to Jehovah, and wear a purer robe and a brighter crown than they could have done, even though the first Adam had retained his integrity (see ninth, nineteenth, and twenty-first verses.) But it may be asked, Does not the eighteenth verse teach that this free gift is *universally* bestowed, that all men are justified in Christ? Did it teach this, we could have no hesitation in saying, that it must do so in direct contradiction of many other of the plainest passages of God's word, passages which declare that many are in hell, and that many more will go there. It is surely not necessary to prove that such have not been, and never will be, *justified*. If there be any difficulty in the passage, it arises from our forgetting that, through the whole chapter, the apostle is keeping before us the existence of two great families and their representatives; and in strict accordance with this, teaches us, in the eighteenth verse, that as by the offence of Adam judgment came upon *all* whom he represented, all his natural seed, to condemnation; so the free gift came upon *all* whom Christ represented, all his spiritual seed, to justification.

And now the solemn, the important question, arises, How may I obtain this justification? What

must I do to inherit eternal life? The inquiry is answered most satisfactorily in the first and second verses: 'We are justified *by faith*,' 'we have access *by faith* into this grace.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art worthy to receive blessing, and honour, and glory, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Thou madest man upright; but he has sought out many inventions. We confess, with shame, that whilst thou didst plant man a noble vine, wholly a right seed, we have become the degenerate plants of a strange vine. We were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us. We are by nature the children of wrath, even as others. We have carnal minds, which are enmity against God, and are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. We are born of the flesh, and in our flesh dwells no good thing. Our whole head is sick, our whole heart is faint, and from the sole of our foot to the crown of our head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores. Our heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. O Lord, thou mightest justly separate us unto all evil, according to the curses of the broken covenant, and blot out our names from under heaven. —Thou mightest put into our guilty hands the cup of trembling, and make us drink it even to the very dregs. But thou hast not dealt with us according to our sin, nor rewarded us after our iniquities. Thou art God and not man, and therefore it is that we are not consumed. And now we adore thee, that, for us sinners, there is yet hope; that thy Son Jesus has been exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. Grant, gracious God, that we may be washed from iniquity, and cleansed from sin. O wash us in the blood of the Lamb, and we shall be whiter than the snow. As Christ was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, grant that we may be made the righteousness of God in him. We glory only in his cross, and we rejoice to call him the Lord our righteousness. For his sake do thou freely pardon us, and through him let us have access into that grace wherein believers stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Let the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. If any members of this family are yet dead in trespasses and sins, O let them be quickened. Open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God. If in any of us thine own good work has been begun, do thou

perfect that which concerns us. May we all have clean hearts created, and right spirits renewed within us; and being constrained by the love of Christ, may we live as those who have been born again. Give us this night to sleep sweetly, and to awake in health. May those we love be united with us in Christ; and may we all at length meet to rejoice in that rest which remains for the people of God. Hear in heaven our humble evening prayers; and to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will we ever ascribe glory and praise. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE V.

SCRIPTURE—JOB V.

REMARKS.

It is universally admitted that God is a being of infinite benevolence. It is universally felt, that throughout this world an incalculable amount of bodily suffering and mental distress exists. And the question naturally arises, How can both these things be? If God be good, how is his creature miserable? After creating this world, has he left it and its inhabitants to the guidance and control of chance? No—we learn from the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses, that, by a painful necessity, affliction is linked to our existence here in the purpose and decree of God. Distinctly and frequently are we taught that it is God who afflicts, either by his own immediate power, or through the permitted agency of others 'he doth afflict.' David says, 'Thy waves are gone over me.' Micah saith, 'Hear ye the rod, and *who* hath appointed it.' Amos saith, 'Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?' When the wicked prevail, it is because the Lord uses them as his sword, Ps. xvii. 13. But why does God send suffering? Why is man born to trouble? Is it because of any taint of malignity in the divine Head? Any thirst for revenge? Any delight in witnessing the miseries of his creatures? To suppose so would be the guiltiest and the grossest blasphemy. 'He doth not afflict willingly the children of men.' We are born sufferers, because we are born sinners. For the maintaining of his throne in righteousness—for the upholding of purity and peace throughout his vast dominions—for the preservation of happiness amidst the unnumbered and yet unfallen subjects of his sceptre, has the great and good Governor of the universe, by an unalterable decree, attached suffering to sin. If at any time a blasphemous or rebellious thought arise in the sinner's soul because of his afflictions, let him pause, and put to his conscience this question, Is this deserved? And conscience, if not seared, taking a hurried glance over the past, and looking with a piercing eye upon the scene within; upon a stubborn will—affections estranged from God—passions deeply diseased, will quickly answer, it is

all deserved, and more than all ten thousand fold. Then let him remember, 'if his heart condemn him, God is greater than his heart, and knoweth all things.'

But to God's redeemed children afflictions are not *penal*. He in whom they trust has, in his own body on the tree, endured the penalty for them. 'The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all; he hath finished transgression, and made an end of sin; the blood of Christ cleanseth from *all* sin.' Why, then, does God afflict his children? He chastens them 'for their profit, that they might be partakers of his holiness.' Although renewed in the Spirit of their minds, they are not yet made perfect in holiness—the lost likeness of their Father is not in all its parts restored—the disease of sin not wholly eradicated—the estranged affections not entirely and fixedly replaced on him who should be supremely the object of them—the precious metal not perfectly separated from the dross—hence does he, as an affectionate Father, use the rod to correct every unholy passion—as a kind physician, give the bitter medicine to remove disease—as a skilful refiner, keep us in the furnace till the dross is extracted and his own image seen. Sometimes we may not be able to discover why afflictions are sent, and we are ready to repine. We have been as diligent in duty, and our hearts have been as ardently affectionate to God, not certainly as we ought to have been, but still much more than at other times when no affliction oppressed us. But we should remember, that we may have indulged in some secret sins, known only to him who trieth the reins and searcheth the hearts of the children of men; or he may foresee some coming temptation against which he would prepare us, by inducing a higher degree of spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, as when Paul received the thorn in the flesh, lest he should be exalted above measure; or he may be making trial of our faith, as when commanding Abraham to enter on a course of most intense mental suffering, from the prospect of sacrificing his own Isaac; or he may be preparing us for undertaking some more arduous duties than any to which we have yet been called, as he fitted David for a throne and a kingdom by a lengthened series of hardships and sufferings. Whatever may be the immediate object of God, whether known or concealed, still may we, with the most implicit confidence, trust in the love and wisdom of him who layeth on the rod, neither despising 'the chastening of the Almighty,' nor fainting when we are rebuked of him; but resting calm in the assurance, that out of the bitter will come forth sweet; and that in every case of his parental rebuke we may in faith use the language of the seventeenth verse, and say, Blessednesses are the portion of that man whom God correcteth.

PRAYER.

Unto whom shall we come but unto thee, O Lord, in whom we live, and move, and have our being? Through another night thou hast preserved us, and we bless thee. Others have been tossing in the furnace, while we rested in peace; and many through the night have slept the sleep

of death, while, though utterly unworthy of thy care, we have been privileged to see the light of another day, and to meet again around this altar. With humble and grateful hearts we would render to thee that praise which is most justly due. Teach us, O Lord, more and more of the evil nature and the bitter consequences of sin, that we may come to hate it with a perfect hatred, and be enabled to throw off its degrading yoke, and its cruel bondage. Give us grace to look on it as standing forth in the dark picture of human suffering; in the agonies of the cross; in the triumphs of death; and in the torments of the damned; and may we be filled with holy fear lest we sin. May we be watchful that we offend thee not in thought, or word, or deed. If in the temple of our hearts there be any idol set up, any accursed things hidden, O search those hearts as with a lighted candle, and bring forth and destroy whatever is hateful to thee. Though that evil thing should be valued as a right hand, enable us to cut it off; though dear as a right eye, strengthen us to pluck it out. We earnestly pray that sin may not have dominion over us, but that wrestling and striving in the might of the Holy Ghost, we may obtain the victory. Permit us, O God, to ask, that thou wilt spare us from severe suffering. With shame and sorrow do we confess how much we deserve it; and that wert thou to enter into judgment with us, and to condemn us, we must acknowledge the justice of thy sentence. But approaching in the name of thy holy child Jesus, who has borne our sins and carried our sorrows, we would beseech thee to pity us as a father pitieth his children, and freely and fully to pardon us. If, Lord, thou see it necessary to lay on the rod, O let it be in tenderness. Take us not away from each other in thine anger, nor chasten in thy hot displeasure. Prepare us at all times for coming afflictions. Strengthen us under them, sanctify us by them, and make them to work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. For thy children who are now being chastened, and especially for any such who are dear to us, we entreat these blessings. May he who walked with the three children in the fiery furnace, who can sympathise in that he also suffered, make his grace sufficient for them, and at length bring them ransomed, regenerated, and sanctified, home to heaven. All we now ask is in his name, to whom, with thee the Father and the Holy Ghost, we would ever ascribe all glory and praise. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLVII.

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS VI.

REMARKS.

The fifth chapter concludes with a most emphatic statement, declaring that eternal life springs to us from the free and sovereign grace of God. The apostle, anticipating the objection often made since his day, that the natural and necessary tendency of this doctrine is to lead to licentiousness, shows they utterly misunderstood the subject who suppose that the grace of God only saves a man from the punishment, and not from the power of sin; that it suffers a man to live a life of iniquity, and then merely delivers him at death from its curse and condemnation. True though it be that a man becomes the subject of grace without any previous holiness to merit the gift, yet the moment he comes under its influence, a total change is effected, not only as regards his prospects, but as regards his present state and character. Up to this moment, whatever may have been his natural amiabilities or excellencies, he was spiritually dead, his heart was enmity against God—his members instruments of unrighteousness—his prospects dark—his reward eternal death. But now the Holy Ghost has breathed upon his soul—life is implanted—faith exercised—pardon bestowed—the old man with his lusts crucified, and a new man raised up after the image of Him who created him. Well then may the apostle ask the question, ‘How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?’ As natural death cuts off from all connection with our wonted companions, pursuits, and pleasures, so the man who, through grace, becomes dead to sin, cannot live any longer therein. This is signified in our receiving that solemn ordinance by which we are sealed as members of his mystical body. It is not said that we are baptized in the name of Christ, but into Christ, into the death of Christ; that is, into a participation of all the blessings purchased by his death, and into a conformity unto his death in our dying to sin. His death was by crucifixion, so is the death of sin in us, sixth verse. His was a most painful death; and in the death of sin there is the cutting off the right hand, the plucking out the right eye. As his death was lingering, so is the death of sin in the soul. He was put to death; and so tenacious of life is sin, that unless put to death by the Spirit of God, it would live for ever; live under the wrath of God, and amidst everlasting burnings, and yet never die.

But we must not only be baptized into Christ's death, but into his burial also. Being buried implies our continuing under the power of death. When the body is laid in the grave, it is eternally separated from all the business of this world; and so the separation from sin which takes place is not for a little time, it is an eternal separation.

There is not, we conceive, any reference here to the mode of administering baptism. We are said to be baptized into his death; but there is nothing in the manner of his death to explain the mode in which baptism should be administered. We are said

to be planted in the likeness of his death; but surely the apostle, when using this figure, is not intending to teach us how we should be baptized. Nor can we see any reason, except to serve a party, why the third figure, 'buried in baptism,' which refers to the very same thing as the other two, should be made to explain a new subject, and one altogether foreign to the apostle's object and reasoning.

It is required here that we should die to sin, and be buried or separated from it; but this is not all; we must be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and raised up in the likeness of his resurrection to walk in newness of life. When the old man is crucified, and the new man created, then, as 'a servant of righteousness,' 'a servant to God,' he for the first time comes to fulfil the end of his existence, and from the heart obeys God's word, both in the faith of its promises and the discharge of its duties. His soul, having been subdued and melted by divine grace, has been, with all its powers and affections, poured into the mould of the gospel, and taking the impression, now presents the moral and glorious image of him from whom that gospel emanated.

PRAYER.

Most holy and most gracious God, we draw nigh to bow on thy footstool, conscious of our utter unworthiness to approach thee, yet taking encouragement from thy kind invitations and thy precious promises. We bow down most humbly to acknowledge our great sinfulness. We confess that we have been the servants of sin; that iniquity has had dominion over us; and that we have most fully deserved the wages of sin, which is death. Long ere this thou mightest have cut us down, and assigned us our portion in that place where hope never cheers, and prayer is never heard. But thou hast had patience, and we now rejoice that there is mercy for the chief of sinners, even for those who were dead in trespasses and sins. Let us, O Lord, be partakers of that rich and free grace which bestows on the humblest believer eternal life through Jesus Christ. Grant that we may hear thy voice saying to each of us, Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee. However deep, or aggravated, or manifold they have been, blot them all out, and let the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. As we are not under the law, but under grace, grant that no iniquity may have dominion over us. Let our old man be crucified with Christ, that the body of sin may be destroyed, that henceforth we may not serve sin; and let not sin reign in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof; but being made free from sin, let us become the servants of righteousness. Being baptized in the name of Christ, that it may be found we have

been baptized into his death,—let us be buried with him in a complete separation from the pursuits of sin. Let us be planted together in the likeness of his death and resurrection, that as he was raised from the dead by the glory of his Father, so we may also walk in newness of life. May our hearts be moulded by the gospel into the image and likeness of our Lord. Write thy law on our hearts, that we may be the epistles of Christ; written by the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. Make us to delight in the law of God after the inward man; and let us not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Not satisfied with what we may have already attained to, may we be found pressing continually forward to the mark of the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus. May we be not only dead unto sin, but as those made alive unto God. May we be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. May we work while it is day; and when the night of death cometh, may we be found ready, and waiting to enter into the joy of our Lord. And to thy name, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all the glory. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 17.

SCRIPTURE—JOB VII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The words of Job in this passage are full of melancholy. Subjected to great and complicated suffering, he mourns the wretchedness of his state. He appears to derive some pleasure from recounting to others the misery which he felt, that he might at least have their sympathy and compassion. So agonized was his body, so distracted was his mind, that he no longer considered life a blessing, and he had rashly expressed the wish that death might close his sufferings, 'that it would please God to destroy him, that he would let loose his hand and cut him off.' He attempts to excuse his desire of death; and for this purpose he speaks of the weariness and labour of his life. He compares himself to an hireling, who, forced to earn his bread with the sweat of his brow, looks with anxiety for the shades of evening that may release him from his labour, and permit him to rest. But even night, that brings repose to the labourer, brought no comfort to the patriarch's heart. In the fourth verse he draws a vivid and affecting picture of his sufferings. He had lain down to rest, but sleep forsakes his eyes. Though he had longed

for the silent hours of night, he finds that they bring no alleviation to his sufferings. Full of 'tossings to and fro,' he anxiously looks for the dawn of day, faintly hoping that the return of morning light may give some relief to his misery.

Ver. 7. Turning from his friends, who appear to have been weary of his complaints, he expostulates with God, and pours out before him 'the anguish of his spirit.' Beautiful and affecting is his description of the life of man. It is compared, in its vanity, to the wind that passes by, to 'the cloud' that riseth for a short time, and then 'is consumed and vanisheth away.'

Ver. 17. In the midst of his deep despondency still there are expressions of piety. He thinks of the insignificance of the creature, and then of the greatness of the Creator, and wonders at the condescension of Him who reigns above, that he should take such care of weak and worthless man. Though he had attempted to justify himself before his friends, before God he acknowledges his guilt, and earnestly prays that his sins may be forgiven before he 'sleeps in the dust.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The example of Job is set before us in the New Testament (James v. 11.); but let us remember, that it is his patience, not his fretfulness, that we are invited to imitate. We see in this chapter that he had times of complaining. The best of men are not free from infirmities, because they are but men. When tried with affliction, let us be more anxious that it may be sanctified than that it may be removed. Let us never repine under the hand of God, who can bring light out of darkness, and good out of evil, and who makes 'all things work together for good to them that love him.' Let us be thankful to our heavenly Father when we remember the quiet repose of the past night, and think how many, like him whose words we have been reading, have been tossing on beds of sickness. And let us above all things imitate the patriarch in praying for the pardon of our sins, as we know not how soon or how suddenly we may be called before God's judgment-seat.

PRAYER.

We come into thy presence, O God, to thank thee for the light and blessings of another day. We laid us down and slept, we waked again, for it was the Lord sustained us. In thine unerring wisdom thou hast cast a veil over the events of futurity; we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth. Enable us, at all times, to rejoice in the thought, that we have a Father in heaven who careth for us, who knoweth whereof we are made, and who remembereth that we are but dust. And if, Lord, for the trial of our faith, affliction is permitted to befall us, save us from repining against thee. Convince us that thy way is the right way. Make us submit to thy will in all things, not because thou art infinitely powerful, but because we know that thou art in-

initely good. Keep us from dishonouring thee by unworthy thoughts of thy dealings and character. Make us from the heart to say, It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth unto him good. Keep us this day from danger and sin. When engaged in the business of time, let us never forget the concerns of eternity. Help us to remember how short and uncertain life is; how soon we must leave this world and go to our account. Grant that every day added to our lives may find us loving thee more, and serving thee better, and at last may we be fitted to spend in heaven an eternal day of rest and glory. Look down mercifully upon us, O thou preserver of men, and pardon our sins. For the sake of our crucified Redeemer, blot out all our iniquities, receive us into thy favour, and let thy banner over us be love. O grant that before we sleep in the dust, our peace may be made with thee, our meetness for heaven may be complete. With ourselves, we pray thee to bless our relations and friends. Let their souls be precious in thy sight. May thy kingdom come. May thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. Let the people praise thee, O Lord, let all the people praise thee. Hear in heaven, thy dwelling place, the voice of our morning supplication, which we present before thee in the name of our once crucified, but now exalted Saviour. And to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, be everlasting praise. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 12.

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS VII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

It had been objected to the gospel that the doctrine of free grace would lead to licentiousness, and encourage sin. In the preceding chapter the apostle proves this to be an abuse of the doctrine, and shows that so far from the gospel giving any encouragement to licentiousness, it had the very opposite effect, and afforded the highest motives to the cultivation of holiness.

Ver. 1—6. Here he shows that the law held dominion over us when in our natural state of sin; but as by the death of the husband, or wife, the survivor is freed from the marriage, more so by the offering of Christ's body on the cross we are freed from the demands of the law. United to him who is raised from the dead, and who liveth for ever, our hearts are sanctified; and where before the rank weeds of corrupted nature alone had sprung, we now bring forth the fruits of holiness unto God. We devote ourselves to his service with the affection of children. No longer in the flesh, and subject no more to the

condemning power of the law, we serve him with a renewed and holy spirit.

Ver. 7—13. Paul here explains the use and effect of the law. 'By the law is the knowledge of sin.' The state of Paul, and of every believer before conviction of sin, is here described. In his unrenewed state he was ignorant of the pure and spiritual nature of the law. He thought himself 'rich and increased in goods, and in need of nothing, when,' in truth, 'he was wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked.' He was once 'alive' in his own estimation. He was in peace; but it was a deceitful peace. He was ignorant of his state in the sight of Jehovah, ignorant of the dreadful opposition of his heart to God's authority, and without dread of the awful danger impending over him. But as soon as he obtained proper views of the spirituality and extent of God's law, he was roused from his stupor, overwhelmed with a sense of sin and the deep depravity of his heart. A conviction of guilt pressed heavily on his enlightened and awakened conscience, and made him sensible that he was sunk in corruption and ruin.

Ver. 14—25. Having exhibited the operation of the law in producing conviction of sin, the apostle in this section comes to show its effects on the mind of the believer. Knowing that the law is spiritual, he feels how much he falls short of its requirements. Though renewed in the spirit of his mind, he laments that his sanctification is far from being complete. Though ardently aspiring to conformity with the divine will, he feels that the power of sin is not yet subdued. He finds a law in his members opposing his better judgment; and he describes, in earnest and vivid language, the contest between the power of sin and his desires after holiness. This contest is referred to also in the fifteenth verse of the following chapter, and is described in Gal. v. 17.

Struck with a sense of danger lest he might fall again into the bondage of sin, and seeing that its wages are eternal death, his feelings burst out in the bitter exclamation, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver from the body of this death?' But calling to mind the finished work of the Redeemer, his bosom glows with gratitude. His struggling spirit hears the cheering voice, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you;' 'if you know the truth, the truth shall make you free.' And in view of certain and glorious victory, he exclaims, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us try to have, like the apostle, proper views of the law of God. We see there is great danger of our being satisfied with our spiritual state, when we ought not to be satisfied with it; and, therefore, it should be our care not to allow self-love, or the opinions of others, to sway our judgments, but to keep in view the divine law in all its holiness and purity. Our hearts should be faithfully examined; our thoughts, and words, and conduct, should be frequently brought to the law and to the testimony. If this be done, we cannot fail to be humbled in the presence of God, to feel the insufficiency of our best services, and be brought to him who is mighty to save.

We learn from this chapter that the life of the believer is not a life of ease and inactivity. There is a battle to be fought, a victory to be gained. Even in the Christian the power of sin is not completely destroyed. Still it struggles for the mastery. Be it ours to resist its attempts. Think of the misery and ruin sin brings along with it, and think of the joy and the reward of victory. 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.'

PRAYER.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, we come this evening before thy throne imploring thee to have mercy upon us, and to hear our prayers. We are ashamed, and blush to lift up our faces unto thee, for our iniquities have increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up into the very heavens. We are wise to do evil; but to do good we have no knowledge. Our best resolutions have been as the morning cloud and early dew, that passeth away. O Lord, enlighten our darkened understandings. Give us more clear and correct views of the purity of thy holy law; and under a deep sense of our great and manifold offences, bring each of us before thee with the earnest cry, God be merciful to me a sinner. We mourn over our sinful and corrupted hearts; we lament our proneness to the world and earthly things. Take away, O God, the spirit of delusion. Forbid that any of us should say to our souls, Peace, peace, where there is no peace. Search us, O God, and know our hearts; try us, and know our thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting. If any now in thy presence be far from thee, any in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, O teach him his danger, spare him time to repent before it be too late. Grant that the poor wanderer may be brought back to thy fold, and made to rejoice in the message of the gospel. Make us all to know the love and compassion of our divine Redeemer, and, in our blessed experience, to feel the joy and peace of believing. Exposed as we are to many temptations, we look up to thee for aid. Send down thy holy Spirit to strengthen and uphold us. Enable us to fight the good fight of faith. Be thou, O God, our guardian and our friend. May thy divine arm support us amidst all the dangers and trials through which we are destined to pass. Putting on the whole armour of God, may we triumph over every adversary; may we be more than conquerors through him that loved us. May the experience of thy love, and the assurances of thine affection, animate us under every trial. When heart and flesh faint and fail, be thou, O God, the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever. Bless all our friends. Keep us safely

this night, guide us in all our ways, and fit us for thy heavenly kingdom. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE VII.

SCRIPTURE—JOB IX.

REMARKS.

Job had been treated unkindly by his friends. Because his trials were many and severe, they unjustly concluded that he was a great transgressor. They thought it impossible that God would allow a righteous man to suffer so much and so long. 'If thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous;' 'behold, God will not cast away a perfect man.' His state was one of the deepest affliction. He had been suddenly deprived of his children, his property had been destroyed, his body was bending under the load of disease. But the cup of sorrow was not yet full. His pretended friends attacked his character, and upbraided him as a reprobate and a sinner. In the ninth chapter he meekly replies to these unjust and cruel imputations. Before the eye of omniscient purity all are sinful. If God should lay to the charge of any man his multiplied transgressions, he could not answer him one of a thousand. And to contend with the strength of the Almighty, is equally vain as to impeach his wisdom. Some have dared to set themselves in opposition to the Sovereign of the universe; but was it ever known that they prospered? On the contrary, has not the vengeance of heaven been poured upon their devoted heads, and shown at once their folly and their weakness?

Ver. 5. How sublime the description here given of the power of God! Mountains, which are to us the very emblems of stability, are removed at his pleasure. The earth itself trembles to its foundation. The sun is veiled in darkness at his command, and the stars of the firmament are extinguished. The heavens are spread out by his Almighty hand, and the proud waves of the ocean are trodden by his feet. Not only have unnumbered worlds been called into being by his command, but he still superintends the vast machinery of nature. In regions to which imagination itself has never reached, the wisdom and power of the Almighty are wonderfully displayed. He is present in every part of the universe which he has formed, preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions. Were his supporting arm to be withdrawn for a moment, all would be ruin. Though his presence is not visible to the eye of man, the operations of his wisdom and power are every where manifest.

Ver. 21. What Job had said of man's utter inability to contend with God, he here applies to himself.

Though he maintained his integrity in the sight of man, and denied the imputation of gross and secret wickedness with which they charged him, he was humble in the sight of God. He acknowledges that, in the presence of that awful Being who inhabiteth the praises of eternity, he dare not justify himself, and that the very expression of a self-righteous claim would prove it to be unfounded. What low and imperfect views of the purity of God's law, and the holiness of his character, must they have who imagine they can live up to its requirements, and claim, on the footing of their own obedience, the reward of his approbation.

Ver. 22—24. Reference is here made to the special argument of his friends. He insists that suffering is not the mark of wickedness, because it often happens that the workers of iniquity enjoy the good things of this world, when the righteous are tried with many sufferings, and sometimes go mourning to their graves. Clouds and darkness may now surround the dispensations of the Almighty; but we may rest assured that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

Ver. 25 to the end. It must be acknowledged that Job here speaks unadvisedly with his lips. He complains of the swiftness with which all his property had passed away, and the heaviness of his present sufferings. These were made doubly distressing by the uncharitable insinuations of his friends. It was enough, he thought, if his body was racked with pain; but it was past endurance that imputations should be cast upon his integrity. From the severity and long continuance of his afflictions, he despaired of his righteousness ever being established, forgetting to 'commit his way unto the Lord, who shall bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noon day.' The mind of the patriarch was heavily oppressed. He had experienced how hopeless is the task to argue with God, or to stand justified in his presence. He deeply felt the necessity of a mediator; and although at times he seems to have been favoured with a prophetic glimpse of the coming Saviour, his views were now clouded by the deep distress in which he was overwhelmed. On this all-important subject he ardently desires more clear manifestations of the divine will, and anxiously looks forward to the time when clouds and darkness shall be dispelled, and the way of pardon and acceptance be made known.

PRAYER.

Thou, Lord, art high and lifted up; thou sittest upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; thou stretchest out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadest them out as a tent to dwell in. Give us, we beseech thee, just conceptions of thy power, thy wisdom, and thy goodness. Convince us that it is vain to contend against thee, or to seek for happiness where thou hast forbidden us to walk. We beseech thee, Lord, to endue each of us with a meek and charitable frame of spirit towards all our fellow men. Suffer us not to assume thy right, or attempt to pass judg-

ment upon their spiritual state ; but enable us to strive and pray for the conversion of all around us. Enlighten our minds in the knowledge of heavenly truth, and make us to see and acknowledge our own guilt and pollution. If we justify ourselves, our own mouths shall condemn us ; if we say we are perfect, it shall also prove us perverse. Behold us, O Lord, prostrate at thy throne. We are helpless in ourselves ; but we are encouraged by thy promises. We come unto thee through him who is the way, the truth, and the life. Look upon the face of thine anointed. Hear the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. Enable us to renounce every self-righteous plea, and to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Save us, O God, we beseech thee, not only from the punishment, but also from the power of sin. Deliver us from its bondage. Let it not have dominion over us ; but, walking as children of light, may we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Let our path be as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. May thy blessing attend us in all the duties of the day on which we are entered. Preserve us from every danger, and keep us especially from the commission of sin. Let not the temptations of the world, nor the allurements of pleasure, nor any of our temporal interests, ever seduce us from the path that leads to glory. Forgetting those things which are behind, may we reach forth unto those things which are before ; may we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Bless, we humbly beseech thee, all our friends. Some of them are far from us ; but we rejoice that they are near to thee. Guide them by thy wisdom, protect them by thy power. Grant them so much of temporal good as thou seest to be conducive to their eternal welfare ; but, above all things, bestow upon them those true riches that shall endure for evermore. Hear us, O God of our salvation, and grant us an answer in mercy and peace, since all we ask is for the sake of our Redeemer Jesus Christ, who is the Lord our righteousness, God over all, blessed for evermore. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLVIII.

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS VIII.

REMARKS.

In the previous discussion of his subject the apostle had established the truth, that believers are not under the law, but under grace ; and from this he draws the inference, contained in the beginning of this chapter, 'there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' He describes in this passage of scripture the privileges of God's people ; and this is the first and most important of them all, Christ has died for their sins, and being united to him by faith, they are free from the punishment due to their sins, and are accepted in the sight of God. Having broken the commands of the Almighty, and our nature being corrupted, the law cannot bring us salvation, but God has accomplished this by the sacrifice of his Son. Not only the state, but the character, of believers is here described. 'They walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Their minds are not engrossed with sensuality and worldliness. Were this the case, they could have neither lot nor part in the matter, for 'the carnal mind is enmity against God.' But on the contrary, they are partakers of that Spirit which is the author and earnest of eternal life. We find the works of the flesh, and the fruits of the Spirit, enumerated by the apostle in Gal. v. 19—24.

Ver. 12—28. This section contains two additional arguments in support of the apostle's theme—the safety of all who are in Christ Jesus. The first is taken from their being members of the family of God. Upon believers is bestowed the spirit of adoption ; they can look up to God as their reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. Though he was angry with them, his anger is turned away, and he comforts them. They are assured that no earthly parent can feel for them the same love and affection as their heavenly Father. And being the children of his adoption, they are heirs of his kingdom, and preparing, by a closer walk with God, to reign with Christ in glory. But as some might think that their afflictions are inconsistent with this view, he warns against this error. Though sometimes united with suffering, they are sustained by hope, and aided by the Spirit under all the trials and difficulties to which they are exposed ; and in consequence of this, all things, however painful and distressing, work together for their good. The afflictions of time are light and transient, not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed. They are no marks of God's displeasure to his people ; but are sent to wean their affections from this world, and prepare them for heaven.

Ver. 23. The indwelling of the Spirit in the heart of the believer is the first fruits of the heavenly inheritance, the same in kind with the blessings of his Father's house, though less in degree. Hope cheers the believer's soul with the bright prospect of future blessedness, and the Spirit sustains him by his intercessions, and stirs up an earnestness of desire which human language is unable to express. Nothing

then, can endanger the safety of believers, notwithstanding all their sufferings, as they are the children of God, and aided and supported by the Holy Spirit.

In the concluding section of the chapter, the apostle proceeds to state two other arguments in favour of the safety of believers. The first is the decree, or purpose, of God; and the second, his boundless and unchanging love. God chooses his people from the world, and brings their temper and conduct into a conformity with Jesus Christ; but this is not the result of any excellence in them, it is alone the act of his sovereign grace. The love of God has been manifested in a way the most striking. For the sake of his people, he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for them all; and by this great and wondrous gift, he has afforded a pledge of every other blessing. When the questions are put, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?' and, 'Who is he that condemneth?' the apostle expresses, in the strongest manner, that those who are united to Christ have nothing to fear. God is for them. As their Judge he is satisfied; as their Father he loves them; as the Sovereign of the universe he overrules all events to the promotion of their best interests. No event can happen to do them injury. No power can separate from his love. No change of circumstances can prevent their blessedness throughout eternity.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, heavenly Father, that on those subjects on which our eternal interests are suspended, we are not abandoned to the dim uncertain light of reason, but have thy word to be a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths. Glory be to thy name, O God, in the highest, who, by the gospel of thy Son Jesus Christ, hast opened to the heavy laden sinner the gates of heaven, and pointed out to the weary pilgrim the path to eternal rest. We rejoice to contemplate the privileges of thy people, to be assured that there is no condemnation to those which are in Christ Jesus. O may we be united to him, by faith, as branches to the vine, and members to the head of the body. Enable us, we beseech thee, to walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. Control, O God of purity and holiness, our actions, words, and desires. Let them never rise up in rebellion against thee; but subdue them to thy will, and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Give us the spirit of adoption. Enable us to trust in thee with filial reverence and love. May the Spirit bear witness with our spirit, that we are thy children, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. If in thy providence we are doomed to suffering, let not our confidence in thee be shaken; but cheered by the assurance of thy love, and animated by the hope of everlasting happiness, let us with patience wait thy time of deliverance. May the

Spirit help our infirmities; may he teach us to pray, and excite more ardent desires for an abiding sense of thy favour, and a participation of thy glory. We rejoice in thee, the God of our salvation. We commit our immortal interests to thy care. O Lord, assure us of thy love. Make us to know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Thou hast mercifully preserved us from the arrow that flieth by day; keep us also from the pestilence that walketh in darkness. We will both lay us down in peace, and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest us dwell in safety. Bless and keep all our relatives and friends. Make them, we beseech thee, partakers of thy grace, and heirs of thy kingdom. Hear, O God, and answer us in mercy, since all we ask is for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in whose words we sum up the desires of our hearts, Our Father, &c.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM xxxvii. 37—40.

SCRIPTURE—JOB xii.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

We have here the answer of Job to the accusations of Zophar. In the preceding chapter Job had been compared to 'a vain man that would be wise, though born like a wild ass's colt.' The harshness of the allusion seems to have called forth the cutting irony of the second verse. 'No doubt,' &c. 'wisdom shall die with you'—with you alone wisdom lives, and in your death it finds its grave. Zophar had urged him to put away iniquity, and that then he should 'shine forth as the morning.' This appears to have produced the reply in the fifth verse, where Job complains that the suffering believer in adversity is regarded by the man at ease and in prosperity as the flickering and dying light of a lamp, which we hastily extinguish, because its feeble glare is useless, and its smoke unpleasant. Job makes his appeal (ver. 7, 8.) to history and experience, and demonstrates the truth which he is every where so anxious to establish, viz., that worldly affluence and personal ease are not always the attendants upon piety; on the contrary, that robbers prosper, and men that provoke God fare sumptuously. These things he confirms by a reference to the delicacies of their table, amply supplied with the rarest dainties which the beasts of the field, the fowls of heaven, and the fishes of the sea, could furnish, and laden with the varied productions of the vegetable world. Probably Job had here in view the rapine and plunder of the Chaldeans and Sabeans, now reposing amid their spoils in luxurious enjoyment; or it may be that he makes this appeal to the animal and vegetable

kingdoms, to show that, by the wise arrangement and permission of God, the stronger and fiercer animals prey upon the unoffending and inoffensive; that the useless tares often flourish, and the good seed is made to languish.

Ver. 11. A distinction in sounds is easily known by the ear, and a difference of tastes felt by the palate, and equally apparent is the hand of God in the dispensations of his providence, permitting for a season the ungodly to triumph, and placing his own children in trouble and affliction.

Ver. 12. Bildad had claimed wisdom for old age and experience, as the attribute of men of years. Here Job admits the propriety of looking to age for these qualities, and then beautifully directs his own and his friend's contemplation to the Ancient of days, with whom were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and whose Almighty power was able to complete what his unerring counsel had devised.

In the concluding verses of the chapter, we see the Almighty presiding over the kingdoms of nature; one while breaking up the overwhelming fountains of the great deep, at another time drying up their channels; sometimes pulling down, at other times building up. The counsels of the wise he bringeth to nought. The advice of the trusty, and the experience of age, he turneth to foolishness. The secret and artful contrivance of the deceiver is as well known to God as the public folly of his deluded victim. Kings are overthrown and carried into captivity, or restored and reinstated by his sovereign power. Kingdoms from him take their rise, reach the summit of their glory, then decline, and either sink into a state of total insignificance, like the empire of Rome, or are cut off from the rank of nations, like the glory of Babylon. Their ruin he completes by the blindness and irresolution of the chiefs of the people, for they grope in darkness like the blind, and lose their way, and they ever fluctuate in uncertain counsels, madly staggering on like a drunken man.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The troubles that afflict the just are many. Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God. Affliction is one of the evidences of our adoption, for we are assured that 'if we be without chastisement, then are we bastards and not sons.' Let us, then, not only expect, but rejoice in tribulation. These light afflictions are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall follow. If pretended friends, in the time of our calamity, stand aloof, or if they proceed to censure us as though our sorrows were our sins, remember this has been the lot of all God's people. O reflect how light a thing it is to be judged of man's judgment, knowing God judgeth righteously. The severe and unjustifiable rebukes of our fellows have a tendency to irritate, and sometimes tempt the wounded spirit to lift up false weapons of defence, such as irony and sarcasm. We have, however, a perfect example in the Lord Jesus Christ, 'who, when he was reviled, reviled not again.' If we be believers, let us never sink under any reverse of fortune, or under any personal affliction, for the promise of God continues unchangeable.

'All things work together for good to them that love God.' Let us also remember that our national prosperity arises from the goodness of God, and that he has only to withhold the light he now affords for our guidance, and our darkened counsels would work out our fatal and final overthrow.

PRAYER.

O thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, and who art the Most High over all the earth, blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords, we would humbly bow in adoring reverence before thee. O our God, we are ashamed, and blush to lift up our faces before thee, for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespasses have grown up into the heavens. Behold we are vile, and we cannot answer thee. We would lay our hands upon our mouths, and put our mouths in the dust this morning before thee, and, like the polluted leper, lift up our cry. Unclean! Unclean! O what reason have we to bless thee that there is a fountain open to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. O wash us and we shall be clean; purify us, and we shall be whiter than snow. Lord, thou hast promised, that if we confess and forsake our sin we shall find mercy with thee. Alas! we, like all flesh, must confess that we have corrupted our way, we have been alienated from the life of God by reason of the ignorance and blindness of our hearts. O forgive wherein in time past we have walked in the way of our own heart, and in the sight of our own eyes, fulfilling the desire of the flesh and of the mind. Enable us henceforth to walk by faith. Show us thy mercy, O Lord. Create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us. Lord, give us thy good Spirit. May our hearts be filled with love, joy, and peace. Enable us to exercise long-suffering and goodness. Increase our faith, make us gentle toward all men, and strengthen us to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world. We give thee hearty thanks for preserving us during the watches of the night. We have laid ourselves down, and slept in safety, for God sustained us. We bless thee, O Lord, for our domestic comforts; but more especially would we bless thee for the means of grace we still enjoy. We beseech thee this day to defend us from evil, and to guide us by thy Spirit to all good. Sanctify all our motives and purposes. May our conversation be as becometh the gospel. If called by thee to suffer, may we endure affliction patiently. May all our trials be sanctified. Grant us daily to die unto sin, and make us meet for the inheritance among the saints in light. O Lord, if agreeable to thy will, continue

to prosper our native land. Leave not, we beseech thee, our rulers and governors to their own counsels, lest our candlestick be removed, and darkness, even thick darkness, should cover the people. O righteous Father, do for us exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or think, and supply all our needs according to thy riches in glory by Jesus Christ. Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, be unto the Lord our God for ever and ever. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIII. 8—12.

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS IX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The doctrine of the divine sovereignty, unfolded and established in the chapter before us, is inseparably interwoven with the gospel scheme of salvation, in its origin, execution, and application. This sovereignty of Jehovah in electing love, and in predestinating grace, is here discussed in such a way as becomes the majesty of the Creator, in silencing the proud arrogance of rebellious man. This glorious doctrine is so utterly opposed to the pretensions of human merit and human wisdom, that no effort of learning, no stretch of ingenuity, has been spared to wrench it, if possible, from the book of God; but all in vain. It spreads its majesty over every page of holy writ, and shines only all the more gloriously, that impotent man has dared to impugn it. But here especially does its glory display itself; here, beyond all controversy, is its place in the scheme of revelation firmly established.

Ver. 1—5. The apostle, in introducing to our notice one of the most illustrious manifestations of this sovereignty in the election of the Gentiles to the possession and enjoyment of spiritual blessings, and the rejection of the Jews from the high privileges they had long boasted of as peculiarly theirs, does so with a most striking declaration of his hearty affection for the house of Israel. Bowing, as he did most humbly, before the manifested will of God, he was grieved to the heart for the misery of his kinsmen according to the flesh. For the day had been, when, in all the pride and hardness of his heart, he had wished himself eternally separated from Christ, even as they now did; but he had seen the enormous guilt of his wish, because he now knew the blessedness of being one with Christ, and on this ground had great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart, that Israel, so long distinguished as God's covenant people, the depositories of his truth, and, above all, the nation from whom the Messiah sprang, should be by unbelief cut off from all their privileges.*

* Such appears to be the import of the words, 'for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ;' a clause which might justly have been rendered, 'for I was wont to wish myself accursed from Christ;' in other words, 'after the manner of the Jews, my countrymen, I was wont to detect the Saviour.'

Ver. 6—13. In order to establish the point, that in conferring spiritual privileges God is sovereign, and acts as such, Paul here refers to the case of Abraham's family. Abraham was indeed chosen; but chosen though he was, all his posterity were not included in the covenant of blessing, for Ishmael's family was excluded; nay, even of Isaac's posterity, of his who was the chosen one of Abraham's sons, Esau was rejected, and that before birth, before the natural character of this profane one had displayed itself. In short, from the Lord's dealings with the posterity of Abraham, it is clear that God acts as a Sovereign, and is to be acknowledged as such.

Ver. 14—18. The question then occurs, 'Is God righteous in acting thus?' To this question the apostle returns an unqualified answer in the strongest possible mode of affirmation, and refers to the Old Testament declarations of Moses regarding Pharaoh as positive proof. In short, in answer to all cavils against the doctrine that God is sovereign, he points simply to God's own sovereign declarations, and leaves the matter there. If a man is not satisfied with this resolution of any difficulty he may feel in admitting the solemn truth in question, no explanation on which we might venture, could remove his scruples.

Ver. 19—29. But some might be inclined to pursue the objection farther, and roll the burden of sin's guilt from off the sinner on the sovereign God. To this blasphemous impiety the messenger of Jehovah returns no answer, but a solemn arraignment for audacious hardihood in venturing upon it; and sums up his argument with God's own example of the potter, who is sovereign over the clay in his hand, and can form it as it pleases him, or leave it shapeless and unformed. Even as the potter deals with the clay, so had the Lord dealt with Jews and Gentiles, calling from both his spiritual family, and fitting each of his children to be a vessel prepared unto glory, while, as Sovereign, he had passed by the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and manifested much long-suffering in sparing them so long; all which sovereign acts the scripture most clearly established, both in speaking of the calling of the Gentiles, and the election of a peculiar people, even out of the elect nation of Israel. And all this shows, that God's word has not failed. The covenant promise, while it had in view all Abraham's spiritual seed, did not embrace all his natural posterity. Therefore the adoption of the Gentiles was not only an instance of sovereign grace, but covenant faithfulness.

Ver. 30—33. And the conclusion of the whole matter plainly is, that the Gentiles, led of sovereign grace, have adopted God's method of justification, and attained to it; but the Jews, hardened in their pride, have spurned this method, and perished in unrighteousness.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Abused privileges issue in the deeper condemnation the loftier they are, and the longer enjoyed. Truly we Gentiles have need to lay this to heart. With Israel's condition before us as a warning, we may surely expect that, in the day when God visits our abuse of privileges, he will visit us indeed. No

pride, no enmity, on the part of man can wrench the sovereignty from Jehovah's hand. Let us bow before it while as yet it is the sovereignty of grace, and rejoice that the words of Hosea are verified in our land, once alienated from God, but now become a land near to him, and inhabited by his children. God forbid that we should be as the Jews, and turn, like them, the Rock of salvation into a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. Many have stumbled at the doctrine of God's sovereignty; but we need not, nay, we never will, so long as we view it as the sovereignty of grace, and the sovereignty of righteousness.

PRAYER.

O thou most blessed Jehovah, we, thy rebellious creatures, would come into thy presence, but only on the ground of thy gracious invitation, and in the way of thine own appointment. We would humbly and gratefully confess, that our every privilege and blessing comes from thee, and is the gift of thy sovereign and unmerited grace, and that the continuance of them depends on thy sovereign will. O Lord, we humbly beseech thee grant us grace to improve our privileges and to prize our blessings, and forbid that we should come into condemnation for abusing them. In all lowliness of mind, help us to watch unto prayer; and regarding thy sovereign favours as beyond all price, and as the gifts of thy love in the blood of thy dear Son, may we stir up our whole hearts to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, that thy love may be magnified, and thy grace glorified in us. Lord, thou art God alone; on thy word our life hangs; on thy word is suspended our eternal state. O thou that bearest long with the vessels of wrath, and hast with much long-suffering borne with us, grant still a continuance of thy sparing mercy; and do thou, who canst out of vessels of wrath raise up vessels of mercy, turn us from being children of wrath to be thy children, even children of the living God. O wash us thoroughly from all our sins, and justify us freely by thy grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. We glorify thee that this, the land of our birth, so long a land of darkness, has become a land of light; and that in this place, where it was said, Ye are not my people, thou beholdest now the dear children of thine own family. O Lord, thou hast brought this to pass in sovereign grace. Continue thy goodness, multiply the number of thy chosen in this land, until the people be all righteous, and visit in sovereign mercy the whole earth, and especially the seed of Abraham, that they may yet again rejoice as thy covenant people. Revive thy work, we most humbly beseech thee, in the midst of the years.

Pour down thy quickening Spirit upon us, and our hearts shall be filled with thy love—our lips shall be opened to show forth thy praises, and from us shall sound abroad thy word unto those that sit in darkness. Into thy hands we commend our souls, and the souls of all our kindred and friends. Be gracious to us, and bless us; and all we ask is in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CIII. 13—17.

SCRIPTURE—JOB XIV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Experience, as well as revelation, prove that man is of few days and full of trouble. All his glory and strength are laid prostrate by the stroke of death, as the flower of the field by the sweep of the mower's scythe; or like the projected shadow of some lofty tower formed with the rising sun, which ever moves onward till the decline of day, and is then lost in the darkness of night; so fleeting is the life of man, so constant and progressive is his journey to the dark chambers of the grave. Fleeting and frail as is human life, the cause of all is sin, 'for the wages of sin is death.'

In the fourth verse we have a clear and decisive testimony to the doctrine of original sin. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' Not one. If the parents are sinful, so are the children; or if the heart be polluted, the conduct cannot be unblemished. The plea of the patriarch seems to be, that God would deal with him not according to his demerit, but in promised mercy. The weary and toil-worn hireling did not more anxiously watch for the setting of the sun, which released him from the labours of the day, than did Job for the appointed hour of his dissolution as a season of repose.

The root of an aged tree, when its stock is cut down, if placed in a moist and favourable soil, will send forth green and luxuriant branches; but man revisits earth no more. As the waters of the river run toward the sea, and are there blended and mingled with the waters of the ocean; so the mouldering ashes of the human body are comingled with the dust of the earth. Yet they are not lost, they only sleep, and when the heavens shall have passed away, they shall awake at the sound of the trumpet of God.

The prayer of the thirteenth verse seems to be either for death or a respite from his present sufferings. Ver. 14. The Spirit of God then started the cheering and comforting inquiry, 'If a man die, shall he live again?' A joyful and glorious view of future happiness seems now to have been presented to the mind of Job; his patience is strengthened; he hears as it were the Redeemer's call, 'Come up hither;' he answers, 'Behold, I come quickly;' he feels assured of the welcome of mercy, and he contemplates Christ

rejoicing in him as his workmanship, created in him to good works, and regarding him as a trophy of the travail of his soul.

Alas! how changeable are the frames and feelings of the children of God! Like the light of the moon, they are subject to many waxings and wanings, and like it, even in its brightest effulgence, subject to temporary and total eclipses. Such seems to have been the dark and despondent clouds which now, like a horror of thick darkness, brooded over the patriarch's soul.

Ver. 16. God appears to him in rigorous severity, numbering every faulty movement, and watching every sin, laying up his transgressions in store, as a miser would seal and sew up his dearly prized treasure in a bag. Then overwhelmed with the view of the greatness and power of God, he considers the hope of man as gone,—gone, by the Almighty arm, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, like the instantaneous crumbling of the mountain, or crashing of the rock when torn by the irresistible violence of the earthquake's eruption; or gone, by gradual and imperceptible degrees, like the rippling wave rounding the pebble upon the sea beach; or the rain of heaven carrying down the seed and soil from the mountain heights to the vales below. Such are the changes that assail both the prosperous and powerful. In the hour of death, when the glassy eyeballs and pallid face proclaim the approach of the last struggle, when the body is racked with pain, and the guilty soul filled with sorrowing, then what avails the world to the dying sufferer? he is then alike heedless of the prosperity or adversity of his family.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The shortness and uncertainty of life, if duly impressed upon the mind, should make us watch and pray, as we know not the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh; and the troubles we daily and hourly meet with here should let us see that this is not our rest, and, when sanctified, they will make us long for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, from whose presence sorrow and sighing shall for ever fly away. Although some have thought the views of the patriarchs, respecting the resurrection, seemed to have been cloudy, yet we have reason to bless God that life and immortality are now brought to light through the gospel. We know that the hour is coming when they who are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of eternal life, and they who have done evil to the resurrection of eternal condemnation. Let us, therefore, gird up the loins of our mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children, not fashioning ourselves according to the former lusts in our ignorance. But as he who hath called us is holy, so let us be holy in all manner of conversation. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, the flower falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.

PRAYER.

Thou everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator

of the ends of the earth, who faintest not, neither art weary, we would approach thee in the name of Jesus. We feel assured that there is an infinite distance between us fallen and depraved sinners, and thee the God of all perfection. Thou art the Almighty; we but worms of the dust. Thou art the King eternal; we creatures but of yesterday. Conscious of our unworthiness we draw near, trembling in our approach to thee. By nature sinners, conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, how shall we stand before thee? guilty of transgressions more numerous than the hairs upon our heads, how can we bear the piercing glance of thine eye, which searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men? God be merciful to us, sinners. O thou who art exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins, compassionate our low and lost estate, wash us in the fountain of thy cleansing blood, and take away all our sin. Create a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within us. Make us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Give us that wisdom that cometh down from above, that is pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. Strengthen our hearts to resist temptation, and enable us in all things to seek thy glory. Turn our eyes away from beholding vanity, and incline our heart unto thy testimonies. As the days of our pilgrimage are both few and evil, do thou give us grace to redeem the time. Help us, O Lord, to run the race set before us, laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset us. Sanctify our thoughts. Let our speech this day be seasoned with salt, that it may minister grace to those who hear it; and whatsoever we do in word or deed, do thou enable us to do all to thy glory. Knowing the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, may that day never come upon us unawares. May we study to die daily, so that when Jesus Christ shall say, Behold, I come quickly, our hearts may be able to say, Even so come, Lord Jesus. And now, Lord, what wait we for, truly our hope is in thee. May the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 15.

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS X.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—5. Although the apostle had shown that his countrymen, the Jews, had stumbled at God's method of salvation, and had missed that blessing because they obstinately clung to their own ways, and rejected his, yet he could by no means glory over their fall, or regard it unmoved. As he had continual heaviness and great sorrow of heart because they abode still in unbelief, so his daily earnest prayer in their behalf was, that they might be saved from that state of wrath and misery. And this prayer he persevered in all the more earnestly, because he was persuaded that they were zealously sincere, though grossly deceived; labouring as they did to secure a personal righteousness of their own, while they abhorred the offered righteousness of God. The end of the law was indeed righteousness to all who perfectly and closely obeyed it; but this end no one could attain because of his sinfulness. It was, then, extreme folly to seek righteousness by a struggle after what no man could attain to. Besides, this end of the law was attained in Christ by all who believed, who had the righteousness of Christ's finished work imputed to them. Nay, the law itself showed this, by shutting up all, without respect of persons, to God's method of justification by him.

Ver. 6—10. And in order to show the difference between the method of self-righteousness adopted by the Jews, and the method of justification revealed in the gospel, and embraced by believers, he contrasts the one with the other; that is, the righteousness which is by the law, with the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ. The former involves complete sinless conformity to the every demand of God's law. It is only by doing the things demanded that we can live. The latter requires simply a hearty acknowledgment that Jesus is the Christ, the accepted Saviour of God's appointment, and a hearty reliance on him as sufficient for the believer's wants. And this method is so simple, as to be within every one's reach. None who needed salvation could have the slightest difficulty but what they raised themselves, since God had freely revealed this method to all, and in the offer of the gospel, invited all to accept of it. But poor sinners do raise difficulties, and, in doing so, make it manifest that the Spirit must make them willing in the day of God's power.

Ver. 11—21. That this way of justification is now open to all, scripture explicitly declares. 'Who-soever believeth shall not be ashamed.' In the sight of God all are guilty, all equally in need of a Saviour. And in graciously proffering a Saviour to them he makes no distinction, but receives all who accept his gift, be they wise or unwise, barbarian, Scythian, bond, or free. He seeks not this man or that man, but the salvation of souls; and as the proffer of salvation is unlimited, so the method of its attainment is simple and unfettered. No conditions

are demanded beyond the sinner's power to attain, no price beyond his resources to procure; all is free, without money and without price, for whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved. Hence arises the necessity of gospel preaching and missionary effort. If no one can be saved but by calling upon God and embracing the offered Saviour, it rests with us, as a duty from which we cannot escape, to offer Christ to all, and invite all to believe. But if salvation be thus free, and freely offered, why was it that the Jews remained in unbelief? Was it that they had never heard of the Saviour? No. Not only had they shared in the universal gospel call, and been invited to believe, but both their law and their prophets in effect had called them to faith. First Moses predicts the translation of gospel privileges from them to the Gentiles, and then Isaiah predicts the calling of the Gentiles, and that openly, without reserve; so that, taking the words of the law and prophets, and the opportunities the Jews had enjoyed, they had been privileged with an invitation to believe far above others; and their unbelief arose not from ignorance, but from rebellious obstinacy, a cause for which there was no excuse, and an evil for which there was no remedy but that of submission, which they could not brook, and so they must perish in their sins. But if Israel fell by unbelief, well may we tremble for ourselves.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O thou most blessed God, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we are permitted to draw near unto thee. Blessed be thy name, that though every mouth is stopped, and we are brought in guilty before thee, we may yet look up to thee for pardon and forgiveness through the precious blood of the atoning Redeemer. We glorify thy name that his salvation is offered without money and without price, and offered to all without respect of persons. We glorify thee that it meets our every want, and provides grace to quicken us to seek its blessings. We bless thee, that the blessing of salvation is brought so near to us, and so pressed upon our acceptance. We thank thee, that we have not to labour to bring Christ from glory to die for us, or up from the grave to plead in our behalf. We glorify thee, that he hath died for our offences, and risen again for our justification. O Lord, work in us all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and thy work of faith with power. Help us as needy, perishing, and condemned, to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ; to confess with the mouth, and believe from the heart, that thou hast raised him from the dead that we may be saved. And do thou arise in thy mighty power to spread the glory of the name of Jesus till his gospel sound through all the earth, and his gracious invitations to the end of the world. Raise up, and send forth many labourers—men wisely zealous for thy

cause, and true lovers of the souls of men; crown their work of faith with abundant success, and give them souls for their hire. And remember, we beseech thee, the seed of Abraham. Our hearts' desire and prayer to thee is, that Israel may be saved. O take away the vail that is upon their hearts when Moses is preached to them. Bring them speedily again under the bonds of the covenant. And, O Lord, prevent us by thy grace from falling under the same obstinate unbelief. Help us more and more to prize and to improve our privileges. Pardon all our past neglect and indifference, our manifold shortcomings, our unnumbered transgressions; and receive us graciously, and sanctify us fully, to bear the image of Christ. For his sake visit us with thy constant mercy. Keep us this night in thy holy fear and keeping. Preserve us to thy heavenly kingdom, and do us all the good we need, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 42.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM LXXXIX. 28—52.

REMARKS.

Having expressed his feelings, the psalmist resumes consideration of that covenant to which he had before alluded; 'then,' or as the word may, with greater force, be translated, 'of old thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One,' (see 2 Sam. iii. 4—17.) and a second time, does he introduce God declaring in person, (ver. 19—37.) the 'exceeding great and precious promises' of this covenant; and intimating, that however harsh his dealings appeared, his loving-kindness towards David's seed should be unchangeable and everlasting.

Again he seems to pause, not, however, as before, to break forth into praise, but to pour out the sorrow of his heart, (ver. 38—45.) Where are the promises of the covenant now? The strongholds of Judah are in ruins, the glory of David's house has departed, the crown is torn from the head of his descendants, and their enemies rejoice.

Still he pleads the very promises which seem so entirely forgotten; and how striking the effect produced upon his own mind, by thus disburdening it before the Hearer of prayer! His doubts are all dispelled, his misgivings removed; and even as he commenced, so does he conclude with the praise of God upon his lips, 'Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen.'

But though the psalm thus primarily alludes to the circumstances of David's house, it evidently looks farther, even to him of whom David was a type, and to that covenant 'ordered in all things and sure,' shadowed forth in the dealings of God with the man

after his own heart. Some of the many lessons which this view of it suggests we may notice.

1. We learn from it that all the attributes of God are pledged to the salvation of his people. How unspeakable the condescension manifested in this! That worms of the dust such as they, should, even in the depths of eternity, have engaged the attention of the Almighty, and their deliverance been the subject of covenant between the Father and the Son. 'My sheep,' said our Lord, 'shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is stronger than all.' Their help has been laid upon one that is mighty—omnipotence itself has guaranteed their safety.

2. We learn farther, that though thus assured of salvation, the children of God must expect to undergo much that is trying and severe. To continue steadfastly on the narrow path on which they have to walk, requires the most unremitting watchfulness, and untiring perseverance. To keep them alive to this, to quicken them in their progress, to recall them from their wanderings, to convince them that the way of man is not in himself, their transgression must be visited with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; 'their own wickedness shall correct them, and their backslidings reprove them.' Their sins become, and that in mercy, the instrument of their punishment.

Let us ask ourselves whether we have any part in the privileges which the psalm details, and are partakers of the blessedness of that 'people who know the joyful sound.' We should remember that it will only tend to our greater condemnation, if we hear this sound, conveying as it does 'good tidings of great joy,' and close our hearts against it. And if 'the Lord be our defence,' &c. then should we strive to walk worthy of the Master we profess to serve. When visited by affliction, let us endeavour to regard it as the discipline by which our heavenly Father prepares us for that abode where there shall be no sorrow, because no sin; and in the end as we look back upon all that has befallen us, shall we have reason to say, 'Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen and Amen.'

PRAYER.

Almighty God, we pray thee to lift upon us, on this the morning of thine own day, the light of thy countenance, and to visit us with that blessing which alone maketh rich. In all the duties which lie before us, vouchsafe to us that preparation of the heart without which no service performed by us can be acceptable to thee, or profitable to ourselves. Convince us of the value of the privileges enjoyed by us; humble us under a sense of how little we have appreciated them as we should; and enable us to bear in mind, that unless they be the savour of life, they must inevitably become the savour of death to our souls. Unworthy we are, O Lord, that such honour should be ours, thus to be permitted to hold converse with thee. O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto

thee, whose are the heavens and the earth, the world and all its fulness. Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is thy hand, and high thy right hand. But blessed be thy name, that to us thou art revealed as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and as made known in him, we see that while justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne, mercy and truth go before thy face. O may it be our happiness to become possessed of right and spiritual perception of thy character as thus announced; to feel the power of those glad tidings of great joy, God in Christ, laying our help upon One that is mighty, and beseeching us to be reconciled. May the enmity of our hearts be slain, and the constraining influence of thy love make us dedicate ourselves entirely to thee. May every thought be brought under subjection to thine authority, that it may become our meat and drink to do thy will; and whatever be thy dealings towards us, enable us of this to be confident, that all things are made to work for good to those that love thee. In prosperity and adversity alike teach us to place ourselves implicitly at thy disposal. May the Lord be our defence, the holy One of Israel our king. We pray of thee, O God, to go forth this day with the preaching of the gospel, and to hasten the period when its joyful sound shall be heard over the length and breadth of the world. Accept of our thanks for thy care over us during the night; keep us, and all whom we should bear upon our hearts before a throne of grace, during this day; and accept of us in the name of Christ. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CIII. 13.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XC.

REMARKS.

This psalm, which is described as a prayer of Moses, is supposed to have been written on that memorable occasion when the people of Israel, in consequence of the report of the promised land carried back by the spies, rebelled against their leader, exclaiming, 'would God we had died in Egypt!' (Num. xiv.) The result is familiar to every reader of the bible. In punishment for their faithlessness and discontent, they were condemned for forty years to wander in a desert, which, in other circumstances, they might have traversed in a very short time. A sentence of exclusion from the inheritance to which they had so long looked forward, but of which they had proved themselves so unworthy, passed upon that generation, who, two individuals only excepted, perished in the wilderness.

The psalm commences with a reference to the care and providence of God over his people, suggested by their peculiar situation at the time. Moving from place to place without any fixed habitation, tents had been their only abode. But wherever they had been, God had proved himself their refuge and their safety, the seat of all their comforts, the centre of all their joys. Afraid, lest by their transgression they had forfeited this privilege, Moses acknowledges their guilt, and pleads for their restoration to favour. In his distress prayer is his resort, and he finds in it his only solace.

We, too, in a figurative sense, may be said to be on our journey through a wilderness, without any continuing city or place of abode. What object so frail and fleeting to which our case may not be compared! The flower that blooms and fades, the shadow that passes away and leaves no trace behind, the insect that flutters out its little space in the sun-beam, the torrent which, rushing without warning, sweeps every thing before its impetuous flood, the sleep from which we awake to look back upon the time passed in it as nothing, the grass which, flourishing vigorously in the morning, lies withered and dry before the close of evening; all these are emblems, and none of them exaggerated, of the shortness of life, and the uncertainty of the tenure by which we hold every thing earthly. If we look back upon a single year, how many the breaches within the circle of our acquaintance that meet our view! Their seats in the house of God and in the family circle, are either empty or occupied by others; and to the world by whom they were honoured or despised, they are become as if they had never been. 'Truly we spend our years as a tale that is told.'

And how is it that man, the most favoured of all the creatures of God, should have thus no abiding place upon the earth specially prepared for his use? The answer to this is supplied by the psalm, 'we are consumed by thine anger.' Here is all the source of all the misery, the sorrow, and death, which now constitute the portion of our race. Our iniquities have separated between us and God.

What then are we to do? Are we to fold our hands and sit down in despair, pining over our sad condition? Is our case so hopeless that no means can avail to restore us to the holiness and happiness in which our first parents were formed? Blessed be God such is not the case. Let us imitate the example given us by Moses in this psalm; acknowledging our guilt and helplessness, let us cast ourselves upon God as our Father in Christ. Let us seek to become acquainted with his character as revealed in the gospel; thus shall we go up through the wilderness assured that God is our 'dwelling place.' And we shall find in him an abode beyond the reach of change, whose security no enemy can disturb, whose peace no envy can poison, whose comfort no adversity can invade, because 'from everlasting to everlasting he is God.'

PRAYER.

Thou, only, O Lord, art from everlasting to everlasting, amid the changes to which every thing earthly lies exposed. Thou only art

without variableness or shadow of turning; God ever all, blessed for ever. We thank and praise thy name, for the mighty privilege we enjoy of adding converse with thee; that we can look up to thee as the hearer and answerer of prayer, and know thou never hast, and never shalt say to any one, Seek my face in vain. But, O Lord, we confess with sorrow and shame, that too frequently we have little care to participate in the comfort which communion with thee is so qualified to afford us; our souls cleave to the dust; the world and its affairs are ever apt to engross our affections to the exclusion of any thoughts of thee. Poor and paltry as are the things which we see, in comparison with those that are unseen, yet are the former the objects of our constant regard, whilst the latter too frequently have no place in our thoughts at all. O God, have mercy upon us. Pour out upon us thine own life-giving Spirit, to awaken us from our lethargy, to enable us to feel the power of the truth, that we may break asunder those chains by which we are kept in bondage, and become partakers of that liberty wherewith thou dost make thy people free. Impress upon us the uncertainty of the tenure by which we hold every thing earthly. Teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Convince us that here we have no continuing city nor place of abode; that we know not how soon the time may come when we shall be summoned to render an account before the judgment-seat of Christ. O then that we were begotten again to a lively hope through the resurrection of Christ from the dead; that our life, being hid with Christ in God, we were enabled to have our affections set upon things above, and to look forward to our Lord's second coming, not with terror, but with joy. Lord, satisfy us with thy mercy; let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish all the works of our hands. Follow, O God, with thy blessing, the various services in which thy people were this day engaged. May thy word have been as the rain and snow which come down from heaven, and watering the earth, make it bring forth and bud. Have mercy, we pray of thee, on all who despise thine ordinances; and keep us mindful that if our privileges are great, so also is our responsibility. We commend to thy care all who are near and dear to us. May they and we be one in him, in whom the whole family, both in heaven and earth, is named. Keep us during the silent watches of the night. We lay ourselves down, believing that thou wilt sustain us. And all we ask is in the name of Christ. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 15.

SCRIPTURE—JOB XVIII.

REMARKS.

Not the least trying portion of the discipline undergone by the patriarch Job, was the treatment he received at the hands of his three friends. They had come when they heard of his affliction, professedly to comfort him: a purpose, the sincerity of which we have no reason to doubt; although the manner in which they discharged the duty, made it the very reverse of consolation. 'Miserable comforters are ye all,' Job might well say regarding them. And it is evident, 'howbeit they meant it not,' that for the time they were suffered to be instruments in the hands of satan, whose object they furthered by their unjust suspicions and bitter reproaches.

In the preceding chapter Job had been reiterating sentiments, to which he had often before given utterance, regarding the prosperity of the wicked, and sorrows of the righteous. The former he saw successful and flourishing, whilst the latter were permitted to pine away without sympathy or regard. Astonished and almost overwhelmed by this fact, more particularly as it was illustrated in his own case, but without impugning a providence whose ways he cannot comprehend, he would willingly seek in the grave that rest which is here apparently beyond his reach.

Bildad, who appears to have been the harshest and most uncompromising of the friends, replies in this chapter to Job's complaints, in a manner very little calculated to soothe the wounded spirit of the afflicted patriarch. He attempts to show that wickedness never failed, even in this life, to entail punishment on all who practised it; a statement which more than implied that the sufferings of Job proved him a hypocrite, richly deserving all he had undergone.

Now in reading this book, we should remember that many of the sentiments of the speakers in the earlier part of it, are founded on the most manifest ignorance of the principles on which God conducts the moral government of the universe. God himself at last takes up the subject, and vindicates his character from the injurious influence of the mistakes thus given forth concerning him.

It is evident, then, that Bildad labours here under a most erroneous impression. Although it be often the case that 'our sins find us out,' and that 'our wickedness corrects us, and backslidings reprove us,' still it by no means holds as an universal rule, that God, in this world, uniformly shows his abhorrence of wickedness by some open marks of anger. To attribute every visitation of providence to some act of iniquity on the part of those who are the subjects of such, would be to forget altogether the nature of the dispensation under which we live. It shall not be until the day when the Lord 'makes up his jewels,' that it shall be discerned 'between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.' On this subject our Lord teaches a most important lesson, when (see Luke

xiii.) immediately after asking 'those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? he adds, 'I tell you, nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' Thus showing that the duty of each is to look to his own salvation, and to repress that curiosity which would pry into the condition of others.

With this caution on our minds, we may see in Bildad's address much that is deserving of solemn consideration. He draws a most masterly and awakening picture of the agony of the wicked, when conscience, aroused from her long sleep, haunts him with the prospect of coming vengeance. Every thing earthly is slipping from his hold, and he can see no resting-place in that dark unknown, now opening before him! Who would not wish to escape such agony as this! If such be our wish, let us lose no time in considering the things that belong to our peace, before the hour comes when we shall mourn, but unavailingly, over our fatuity.

PRAYER.

Thou, O God, art of unspotted purity; thou sittest upon the throne of thy holiness; thou dwellest in the high and holy place, and all thy commands are just, and holy, and true. In approaching thee, how does it become such guilty and polluted creatures as we are, to acknowledge our unworthiness even to take thy name, thy most holy name, into our lips. Lord, we would be prostrate in the dust before thee; we would seek, from our hearts, to be enabled to say, God be merciful to us sinners. Our eyes are upon that hill from whence alone can come our aid. Our hope is in him whom thou hearest always; and because he hath made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, and now ever lives our Advocate with thee the Father, we pray thee, receive us graciously, to subdue all our iniquities, and cast all our transgressions into the depths of the sea. We bless thee for Christ Jesus, thine unspeakable gift. O that our hearts felt the constraining influence of the love manifested in sending him to seek and to save; that we were taught we are not our own, but bound to glorify thee in our souls and bodies, which are entirely thine. And, heavenly Father, we pray that wherever we are, or in whatever avocation engaged, we may remember that from thee all we have comes down; that thou art the source of every blessing we enjoy, and hope we are permitted to indulge. Save us, therefore, from losing sight of the Creator in the creature; deliver us from the tendency so strong within us, to forsake the fountain of living waters, and hew out to ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. Follow, with thy blessing, that portion of thy word now read. Teach us that whether in sor-

row or joy, sickness or health, it is the peace of God alone can keep our hearts and minds. May this peace be ours. We thank thee for the circumstances of comfort and peace, in which we are this morning permitted to approach thee. Do thou, O Lord, be our protector throughout the day. We commend to thy care, the sick and the afflicted. Sanctify bereavements to the bereaved, and prepare us for every duty and trial that may be before us. And hear our prayers for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXX. 14.

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS XL

REMARKS.

Two very important lessons are taught us in this chapter: the first, the exceeding evil of sin; the second, the exceeding riches of the grace of God.

The first is illustrated by reference to the history of Israel. Singled out by God as his peculiar people, he had distinguished them by the most striking marks of his favour, taking up his abode specially among them, and vouchsafing them repeated tokens of his presence, to bless, to support, and protect them; and it was not until they had rebelled again and again against his authority, that 'he gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, to be filled with their own devices.' Such is his abhorrence of sin, that even in his own favourite Israel it could not be tolerated; and when, therefore, chastisement failed to reclaim, the measure of their iniquities was filled up, as was also the measure of the Lord's forbearance. But at the very time God was thus vindicating his own authority, he gave most evident proof of the exceeding riches of his goodness and grace. While Israel was cast off as a nation, many of her number became partakers of privileges more glorious by far than those enjoyed by her kings and wise men in the days of her greatness. Just as during the withering blight which seemed to have come over the whole people during the reign of Ahab, there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, so now was there a remnant of Israel, which proved itself to be the true 'circumcision who worship God in the Spirit.' Of this number was the apostle himself, and all who had obtained like precious faith with him.

But more than this. What Israel had refused to receive, had met with the joyful acceptance of the Gentiles, so that among those, who, but a short time previously, had been carried away by all the delusions of heathenism, there was now a 'chosen generation,' showing forth the praises of him that had called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. What an exhibition was there in this of the wondrous grace of God; out of evil, thus to educe so much good!

And there is yet in store, a more marvellous illus-

tration than either of the preceding, of the goodness of the Lord. It is distinctly announced by the apostle, that the period is to arrive when Israel shall be restored to her privileges, and become, as it were, the first born in that mighty family, gathered out of every kindred, and people, and tongue. We know not how this mighty change shall be accomplished; but this we are sure of, there is 'nothing too hard for the Lord.' And should we not labour and pray for the coming of a day of such deep interest to the world at large, as well as to the Jews, when the blessing bestowed upon them shall make them a blessing wherever their lot is cast.

Why was Israel cast off? because of unbelief. And such is the case with sinners in every age; 'ye will not come to me that ye may have life:' here is our guilt, the ground of our righteous condemnation.

When, then, we look back upon God's dealings in bygone times, let us remember they have been recorded for our learning. We have been grafted into that tree planted by the Lord, from which his ancient people, the natural branches, were broken off, and just as they suffered so shall we, unless we avoid the rocks on which they were shipwrecked.

But one lesson, particularly the history of the past, is qualified to teach us; that is, how very small a portion of the purposes of God we can comprehend. Truly, to us, his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters; but still we can rejoice in believing, that whilst 'clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.'

PRAYER.

How unsearchable, O God, are thy judgments, how past finding out are thy ways to us! Thou sittest upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers in thy sight; thou rulest in heaven, and dost as seems to thee right among the children of men, and who can say to thee with a prevailing voice, What, or wherefore, doest thou? Enable us, O Lord, to contemplate all thy ways and works in that spirit of simplicity and docility which should characterize worms of the dust such as we are. Blessed be thy name, that to that man wilt thou look who is of an humble and contrite spirit, and trembleth at thy word. Give us, we pray, this frame of mind. Mould our hearts into conformity to thy will. Although thy way often appears to us in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, enable us ever to remember that he who spared not his own Son, will, with him also, freely give us all things; so that not one good thing shall fail of all thou hast said concerning thy people. We thank thee for the grace and the goodness of which we are partakers. What are we, O Lord, or our father's house, to have been thus visited and redeemed by thee. O teach us, that by thy grace we are what we are; and from our hearts may we say, Not unto

us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake. Enable us to take warning from thy dealings of old, recorded for our learning. Lord, increase our faith, help our unbelief, strengthen the things that remain, revive thy work in us and around us. And, O God, we pray of thee to hasten that period when the whole earth shall be filled with thy glory; when the blindness shall be taken away from Israel, and the fullness of the Gentiles be gathered in; prosper the means employed for the furtherance of this mighty end; teach us what a privilege it is to be fellow-workers with thee. Convince us, above every thing else, that except the Lord build the house, we labour in vain; that unless he keep the city, we watch in vain. O then may thy blessing be abundantly poured forth, and thy Spirit come from the four winds, to quicken the dead, and strengthen the living more and more. May the joy of the Lord be our strength. Lord, watch over us during our goings out and comings in this day. Be the friend of our friends. Reward our benefactors, and forgive our enemies; and all we ask, is in the name of Christ, to whom, with thee and the blessed Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 17.

SCRIPTURE—JOB XXL

REMARKS.

In the foregoing chapter, Zophar the Naamathite, reasoning from a partial and inaccurate view of God's dealings, maintains the doctrine that to each person in the present life there is a perfect retribution; and insinuates that, therefore, Job was a man of great wickedness, because he was a man of many afflictions. In this chapter Job replies. He refutes the doctrine and repels the accusation. The point to be made good, is, that there is not in every individual's case, in the present life, a perfect retribution. The direct proof adduced in support of this, extends from the 7th to the 17th verse. In this passage, there is sketched, with a skilful hand, a picture of the prosperous wicked. Though sinful, yet their life is prolonged; though unthankful, yet their substance is increased; though profane, yet their days are brightened with joy; and, though atheistic, yet they have no bands in their death. They act as if they were independent, while they owe every thing to God; 'lo! their good is not in their (own) hand.' Here is a marvel—here is a riddle. But it is not to be explained by supposing that God approves sin, and uniformly favours the sinner. No: for we behold him varying his procedure. The wicked are often

prosperous, but they are also often wretched. They drink of the wrath of the Almighty. Job disclaims any intention of being the apologist of these men. 'The counsel of the wicked,' says he, 'is far from me.' He does not allege that they obtain the *approbation*, because they enjoy the *bounties* of the Most High. He pretends not to solve the difficulty on any other principle than that *God is sovereign*. This is intimated in the 22d verse, which forms the key to the whole question—the pivot on which the whole argument revolves. Who shall fathom his counsels? who shall prescribe to him a rule? His intentions towards sinners are not always clearly shown in the fortune of their life, or in the manner of their death. One dieth at ease and in apparent comfort: another dieth in the bitterness of his soul. Their common lot is the grave and the worm. From the 27th verse, Job gives the course of the argument a particular direction, using it in defence of himself from the charges of his friends. 'Ye ask,' says he, 'where is the house of the prince?' as if the ruin of my family was a judgment for my wickedness: ought ye not to have learned from them that go by the gate—from them who have travelled and seen much of human life, that it is not always in this world the Most High displays the *perfection* of his justice; that there is a judgment to come; and for this day the wicked are reserved—to them a day of destruction. Then, God will be just when he judgeth, and clear when he condemns. Having reached this triumphant conclusion, Job demands of his condoling friends, how it is that they can expect him to be convinced or comforted by the views they propound, so narrow in their scope, and so unsound in their application.

Let us learn from this chapter the following amongst other things: namely, that prosperity is not always a mark of God's love, and adversity is not always a token of his displeasure: that we are not rashly to construe the calamities which befall others, to be the judgments of God for their iniquities; that although it does not always appear in every given case, yet the course of providence, upon the whole, is favourable to righteousness, and hostile to sin; that on the great day of account, and amidst the glory and the gloom of eternity, all the seeming inequalities of the divine administration will be rectified; and that it behoves us to prepare, by faith and obedience, to meet the Lord our judge.

PRAYER.

Almighty and everlasting God, we, as the subjects of thy government, draw near to thee as our king. We rejoice to behold thee as thou art revealed in the gospel, seated upon a throne of grace, and stretching forth the sceptre of thy mercy, that the perishing children of men may touch it, and for ever live. Sanctify, we beseech thee, our approach at this time. Unite our hearts to fear thy name. Graciously enable us to view our character in the light of thy law which is holy, and in contrast with thy nature, which is glorious and pure. While we ascribe all strength and majesty unto the Lord, may we

feel and confess ourselves to be frail, helpless, and perishing. Out of the dust we have been taken, and soon shall we return unto the dust again. While we adore thee as the Holy One of Israel, may we discover ourselves to be altogether vile. Alas, we have nothing to hope for from thy justice. O how many are the tokens thou hast given, since the world began, that though hand join in hand, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished. O Lord our God, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day. Our iniquities have gone up, as our accusers, into the very heavens; and unless thy grace interpose, they will appear in the judgment to condemn us. O thou who hast declared thyself to be slow to anger, of great kindness, and plenteous in redemption, do thou, we implore thee, have compassion upon us. For the sake of Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain as an offering for sin, do thou be pleased to visit us with the grace of pardon and acceptance. Have mercy upon us, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out all our transgressions. But we are sensible that in vain shall we look for the gift of pardon, unless we repent; in vain shall we hope for the glories of heaven, unless we turn from the vanities of earth; turn us, therefore, O Lord, and so we shall be turned. Pour out on us a spirit of repentance. Remove not only our guilt, but likewise our depravity. Remit not only our punishment, but restrain also our passions. Create in us a clean heart, renew a right spirit within us; and, though we are by nature degenerate plants, yet may we become as trees of righteousness planted by the rivers of waters, which bear fruits in their season—even the fruits of a holy, humble, and useful life; that so we may please him who hath called us to glory and virtue. We entreat thee, O gracious Father, that thou mayest be a sun to enlighten us during the day we have begun, as thou hast been a shield to defend us during the night that is past. Do thou direct our steps. May we be found setting our heart on no object, and our hand to no work, but what we know has thy holy approval. Many, O Lord, are our spiritual adversaries, let thy good Spirit instruct and help us, so that we may be wise to shun, or strong to resist, temptation. May the love of Christ constrain us to duty, and the example of Christ encourage in trouble. And while, by thy grace, our souls are kept from sin, defend, we beseech thee, our bodies also from danger—from all sudden malady—from all fatal accident. Under the shadow of thy wing may we continually abide.

Going forth in the morning to our several pursuits, attended by thy blessing, may we, in the evening, again be gathered together, crowned with thy loving-kindness, and having in us the answer of a good conscience, through Jesus Christ our friend and Mediator. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXV. 8. (*Second Version.*)

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS XII.

REMARKS.

This chapter, abounding with the purest precepts and the most earnest exhortations, rises as a beautiful result from the comprehensive argument, framed with so much skill and power, in the preceding part of the epistle. The love of God in Christ to his people, the means provided for their redemption, their calling, their sanctification, the high privileges of their adoption; these, and such as these, are the *mercies*, by which the holy apostle beseeches believers to make a solemn surrender of themselves to God. The truths of the gospel are no theoretic scheme, fair to the fancy, but powerless on the heart; ingenious in its structure, but destitute of practical use. Doctrine and practice are there joined together; and who shall put them asunder? The doctrine of the cross, in all its parts, is adduced, as the source, the reason, and the motive of every earthly virtue and every heavenly grace. From a principle of gratitude for the unmerited favours shown them, they are called to a willing and unreserved self-dedication; to *present* their bodies a *living sacrifice*. The language here employed has reference to the ancient ritual; according to which, animals were presented as free-will offerings on the altar of the Lord. The Christian's sacrifice of thanksgiving is to be a *living* one, to distinguish it from that of *slain* beasts; and to denote the energy and activity he is to display in God's service. It is to be *holy*, in resemblance of the offerings under the law, described as without blemish and without spot; and to intimate that the purest of our affections, the choicest of our talents, are to be devoted to him. Our *bodies*, our entire person and nature, are, in faith, to be thus consecrated to him who has bought them with a price, that they may be *acceptable* in the Beloved. And this is a service which is *reasonably* required at our hand. Now as the service of God and the service of the world in its interests and pleasures, are at variance with one another; as it is written ye cannot serve God and mammon, and what communion hath Christ with Belial? our first step is to separate ourselves from the world, not to be conformed to its fashions and its follies; and, next to have all our principles, tastes, and habits changed by the renewing of our mind, into agreement with the divine mind. Not that we can change or renew ourselves, but we are enjoined to use the means—to seek and cherish the influences, by which the Holy Spirit effects this important work. The word '*for*,' beginning the 3d verse, shows that what fol-

lows is to be regarded as additional reasons to enforce what he has stated; and as intended to describe a mind, or a course of conduct, which is not conformed to the world, and which is acceptable to God. '*By the grace given unto me*;' he here adduces the authority of his apostolical office, to give weight and solemnity to these exhortations. He warns them against pride and self-conceit; while, by allusion to the union of believers in one mystical body, of which Christ is the head, he sets forth, in their beautiful harmony and subordination, the offices and duties which it becomes them to fulfil in their several places and relations. The church of the living God is an institution, within which seemliness and order are ever to dwell. The gifts, therefore, which he imparts to its members, whether these be miraculous or ordinary, are all to be exercised in producing the end for which they were given; apart from all jarring or ostentation. He exhorts to liberality without corrupt motives, to mercy without grudging, to courtesy without deceit, to diligence in business without neglecting the devotional exercises of religion; and he crowns the whole with one of the loveliest precepts of the gospel; '*be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*'

Let it be our care to lay up these pointed and precious injunctions in our hearts, and to practise them in our lives.

PRAYER.

O Lord, most merciful and gracious, we come to thee as children unto a father. Blessed be thy name, thou hast been pleased to reveal thyself to us in this tender and endearing relation. For thou didst create us, thou hast preserved us, and thou hast also begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. O do thou enable us, in confidence and affection, to cry, Abba, Father. Worshipping one God, through one Mediator between God and man, may we come animated by one spirit—even the spirit of faith, of love, and of hope. Help us, we entreat thee, devoutly to feel, and reverently to express, what is due unto thy name. Honouring thee by our attitude and our lips, let not our hearts be far from thee. Who, O Lord, is worthy, like thee, to receive all honour, and blessing, and praise? Thy majesty is unspeakable, and thy mercies to us ward are more than can be numbered. Through thy sparing goodness, we have been upheld during another day of our pilgrimage; and the shadows of the evening again close around us in peace. Accept, we beseech thee, our united thanksgiving for thy powerful protection, and thy unwearied care, for the happiness we have enjoyed, and the evils we have escaped, for health of body and peace of mind, for the use of reason, and the prolonged offers of thy grace in Christ Jesus our Lord. For these and all thy other gifts, though we cannot render an adequate re-

turn, we would yet cherish a grateful remembrance. We are sensible indeed, O righteous Father, that, though thou hast nourished and brought us up, we have, nevertheless, proved rebellious children. Thy mercies do but aggravate our offences. Our experience testifies that thou hast dealt bountifully with us; but our conscience witnesseth that we have dealt treacherously towards thee. We bow in thy presence, convinced of sin. Spare us, we implore thee, the doom we have deserved. O let thy pardoning mercy which was not refused to the penitent publican, be imparted to our souls. Whatever thy pure eye has seen amiss in our conduct, during this day and all the days of our by-past life, whatever has been the nature or the colour of our offences, whatever the circumstances of their commission—whether our faults have been secret, or our sins presumptuous; O may the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin, be graciously applied for their removal and forgiveness. Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief; so that being justified by faith we may have peace with God. And do thou so effectually work in us by the power of thy Holy Spirit, that our escape from the penalty of transgression, far from encouraging us to go on in sin that grace may abound, shall lead us, in lively gratitude, to live unto him who died for us, and to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service. No longer deluded by the vanities of the world, or by the influence of our spiritual adversaries, may we sit daily at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in our right mind; listening to his lessons, glorying in his cross, imbibing his Spirit, and waiting for his kingdom. Many, O Lord, our heavenly Father, are the stumbling-blocks and discouragements that meet us in our progress. In mercy unto our weakness, do thou remove these out of the way, or impart the measure of faith and grace needful to surmount them. In prosperity, let us remember that pride goeth before destruction, and may we strive to walk humbly before God. In adversity, let us remember that some of the children of Israel murmured and were destroyed of the destroyer, and may we bear the lesson while we feel the rod: rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulations, continuing instant in prayer. Upheld and animated by thee amidst all the trials of our life and our faith, may our path be that of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. We humbly commend unto thy goodness and compassion all with whom we are connected in the bonds of kindred, of friendship, or of grace. May the young who

are related to us be a seed to serve thee. May the aged be found in righteousness, and let their gray hairs be to them a crown of glory. Committing ourselves to thy Almighty protection, we retire to our repose. O God of Bethel, who with thy ministering angels, didst watch over thy chosen servant Jacob, do thou graciously guard and defend us this night from all evil; and raise us up in the morning to praise thy name and to do thy holy will. This we ask through the mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXVII. 3.

SCRIPTURE—JOB XXIX.

REMARKS.

In unfolding his argument, Job contrasts, in this chapter, his former prosperity with his present adversity as recorded in the next; and then asserts, in a qualified sense, his integrity and innocence. A pensive regret fills his soul, as, reviewing his vanished honours and enjoyments, he exclaims, 'O that I were as in the months past!' Their loss has taught him the value of his earthly blessings; while it has shown him their evanescence. He recounts, in order, the elements of his past prosperity. He was happy in the favouring presence of God: then 'God preserved him' defending his interests, and strengthening his heart; then 'his candle shined upon his head,' giving him light in darkness, showing him the duties he should discharge, and the temptations he should shun; then 'his secret was upon his tabernacle,' assuring him by a pledge unknown to the world, that he was the object of a peculiar care. He was happy in his family: then his children were about him, affording him those precious and numberless delights which a parent alone can feel, when the glad voices of his little ones are heard within his dwelling. He was happy in the plenty and opulence of his condition: the fruits of the soil, and the increase of his flocks, supplying his own daily wants, with those of his own house, and removing far from him the fear of hunger, with all the other ills which extreme poverty brings in its train. He was happy in the affection and reverence which were shown him in public. And here follows a picture delineated by the patriarch himself, of the consideration in which he was held by all ranks and degrees of the pastoral community, and of the manner in which respect was paid to the man of years, of wisdom, and of benevolence, in these remote and simple times of the world: a picture of inimitable beauty; which leads us to fear that society has lost something, though it may have gained much, by assuming a more artificial form. Behold the patriarchal Job in the season of his prosperity: behold the man gifted by God with a spirit of understanding and of prudence, with persuasive lips, with liberality of heart and hand. He stands at the entering in of the gate, amidst the assembly of the

people. The young retire, in deference to his presence. The aged arise, in token of their respect. He speaks; and the princes are silent. He decides; and contending litigants approve. He counsels; and the perplexities of the ignorant are removed. He walks forth; and is hailed as the friend of the poor, the protector of the fatherless and the widow, the shield of the weak, and the curb of the strong. Such was Job in the days of his health and prosperity. And now that a change has come over his condition, what wonder if his soul loves to linger around the memory of the past, and with melancholy pleasure to number his mercies, and to record the answer of a good conscience, in the employment of the gifts with which the all-bountiful One had blessed him!

Let us, like him, use wisely and well the talents and graces with which we are entrusted. Let us, when God recalls them, be contented, like him, to say, 'the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' Let us, while conscious of our sins and our short-comings, before God, and convinced of our need of an atoning Saviour, duly value the answer of a good conscience, when by grace we are enabled to do any thing for his glory, and the good of our fellow-men.

PRAYER.

Gracious and ever living God, who art the Ruler of heaven and earth, the Creator and Judge of angels and of men, with thee is the fountain of life, and to thee shall all flesh come. In thee we live, and move, and have our being. All our well springs are in thee. Mercifully be pleased to listen unto us, while in lowly reverence we come, owning our guilt, with our obligations, and entreating thy gracious aid. It is through the merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we draw near to address thee. On what other ground can we venture into thy presence? Thou only art holy. Evil shall not dwell with thee, neither shall the doers of evil stand in thy sight. The imaginations of our hearts have been evil, and that continually. We are all as an unclean thing. Our righteousness is but as filthy rags. We all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away. We have wearied thy patience; we have misapplied thy gifts: we have resisted thy government: we have quenched thy Spirit, and in the presumption of our hearts we have said, Who is the Almighty that we should serve him; and what profit is there, if we pray unto him? O Lord, most merciful and holy, enter not into judgment with us. For the sake of him who poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, let us now obtain thy favour, which is better than life, and hereafter let us be numbered among thy saints in glory. Our sins have come between thee and our souls, intercepting the light of thy counten-

ance; do thou, we beseech thee, blot them out as a cloud, and our transgressions as a thick cloud; and may we return unto thee, for thou hast redeemed us. By all our felt obligations as creatures, by all the dealings of thy providence, by all the constraining influences of thy word and Spirit, by the cords of a man, and by the bands of love, do thou draw us near to thyself, the blessed fountain of happiness and peace. Be thou henceforth our portion: and let thy law be our delight. May frequent communion with thee hallow our intercourse with the world. Like thy servant Moses, may we endure as seeing him who is invisible. Like Caleb, may we follow the Lord fully; and may our resolution, like that of Joshua, be, that whatever others may do, as for us and our house, we will serve the Lord. O God of our fathers, we humbly implore that, as a family, we may see much of thy goodness in the land of the living, and that thou mayest prepare our hearts by thy grace for the changes that are sooner or later to befall us. We cannot penetrate the veil that hides the future. We know not what a day may bring forth. Soon our faith may be severely tried by prosperity or by adversity. Soon we may be scattered by providence, or separated by death. Shepherd of Israel, go thou before our face, prepare our way before us. Hold up our goings, and we shall be safe. Preserve us from the error of the wicked, and our feet shall not slide. What thou givest, may we receive with humble gratitude; what thou takest away, may we resign with meekness and patience. Avoiding the extremes to which our sinful nature is prone, may we neither despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked of him. Grant unto us, we beseech thee, a happy issue out of all our afflictions; and, at death, an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Fit us for meeting with thee our final judge; and as this morning we have risen from a bed of refreshing sleep, to praise thee in the land of the living, O may we, on the morning of the resurrection, be raised from the bed of death, a rejoicing family, to give praise unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen.

Thou hast been the refuge and counsellor of thy people in all past times, and thou art now a present God to those who call upon thee. We rejoice in thy unchangeable mercy. The mountains may depart, and the hills may be removed; but thy loving-kindness shall not depart, nor shall the covenant of thy peace be removed from those who place their trust in thee. Lead us, we beseech thee, to that fountain which has been opened for sin and for uncleanness to the whole house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and may we be there washed, and justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. May the Spirit guide us to the rock of ages, under whose grateful shade many a weary traveller has been privileged to rest in safety on his journey through the wilderness which we are now traversing, and by drinking of whose refreshing stream many a drooping spirit has been comforted, and strengthened for pursuing its heavenward course. Create in us clean hearts. Renew right spirits within us. Purify us unto thyself a peculiar people. Prepare us for the fellowship of the godly upon earth, and for holy communion with the blessed above. Seeing that we are encompassed with such a cloud of witnesses as those whose names are already written in the book of life, and casting our eyes upward in humble faith and hope to the blissful countenances of those whose memory is dear to us, who used to share in our earthly griefs and joys, and who now appear, with hearts full of love to Christ, to invite us to the mansions of our heavenly Father's house, may we be all constrained to lay aside every weight, and especially the sins that most easily beset us, and to run with perseverance the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. Take up thine abode, O gracious God, in the hearts and houses of our friends and relatives this evening. Give thine angels charge over them. May no plague come near our dwelling. May the angel of the covenant encamp about us. May we lie down under a deep sense of our guilt and sinfulness, and with humble confidence in thy pardoning mercy, and sanctifying grace. May we lay our heads upon our pillows, at peace with thee our God, at peace with our own consciences, and breathing peace and good-will to all the human kind. Give us quiet and refreshing slumbers. Raise us up, if it be thy blessed will, in health and strength, prepared for all the duties, events, and trials of another day. Extend the knowledge and the savour of the name of Jesus. For his sake be our God and *guide even until death, and in that solemn hour*

be our strength and joy, and through eternity our portion, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLVI.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XCI.

REMARKS.

It is uncertain by whom this psalm was written. It is believed by some to have been composed on the occasion of that grievous pestilence which is recorded in the 24th chapter of the second book of Samuel. That it refers to the Messiah, there can be no doubt, seeing that parts of it, quoted in the New Testament, are applicable to him. The chief singer is supposed to chaunt the first verse with evident allusion to the promised deliverer. The second verse represents the Messiah as replying, and declaring implicit confidence in God. Such language as he uses in this passage, must be regarded as uttered by him only in his assumed character. As God, he is equal in every respect with the Father. In the 3d verse the Levite is again introduced, and addresses the Messiah with assurances of protection, and strength, and victory over all his enemies, till the end of the 13th, with the exception of the former clause of the 9th, in which the Messiah breaks in upon the song of the chaunter. The last three verses of the psalm are spoken by God himself. But although this beautiful portion of scripture may have been sung by the Old Testament church, as primarily descriptive of the character and prospects of the great Mediator of whom the ancient prophets prophesied, and who was the burden of inspired songs of antiquity; yet it was meant then, and it is intended now, to cheer and comfort the hearts of Christ's chosen and believing people. If the language here employed, may be applied to the head, it must also be shared in by the members of Christ's mystical body. If such is the description of the nature, and stability, and fruits of the vine itself, the only difference in the corresponding qualities of the branches can be, that they are derived from the parent stock. Ver. 1, 2. When a man is driven out of himself, and out of the world, and being justified by faith, has free access into that grace wherein the people of God stand, he dwells in the secret place of high and holy communion with his reconciled Father through Christ; and as the shadow, cast by the projecting rock, affords to the traveller a welcome retreat from the direct rays of an eastern sun, so the true Christian has his life hid with Christ in God, lays all his burdens on him who is willing and able to bear them, and finds, in the finished work of his Redeemer, a refuge from a broken and avenging law, a fortress against the temptations by which, both from within and from without, he is daily assailed, and a ground of confidence in God, amid the most trying dispensations of providence with which he can be

people. The young retire, in deference to his presence. The aged arise, in token of their respect. He speaks; and the princes are silent. He decides; and contending litigants approve. He counsels; and the perplexities of the ignorant are removed. He walks forth; and is hailed as the friend of the poor, the protector of the fatherless and the widow, the shield of the weak, and the curb of the strong. Such was Job in the days of his health and prosperity. And now that a change has come over his condition, what wonder if his soul loves to linger around the memory of the past, and with melancholy pleasure to number his mercies, and to record the answer of a good conscience, in the employment of the gifts with which the all-bountiful One had blessed him!

Let us, like him, use wisely and well the talents and graces with which we are entrusted. Let us, when God recalls them, be contented, like him, to say, 'the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' Let us, while conscious of our sins and our short-comings, before God, and convinced of our need of an atoning Saviour, duly value the answer of a good conscience, when by grace we are enabled to do any thing for his glory, and the good of our fellow-men.

PRAYER.

Gracious and ever living God, who art the Ruler of heaven and earth, the Creator and Judge of angels and of men. with thee is the fountain of life, and to thee shall all flesh come. In thee we live, and move, and have our being. All our well springs are in thee. Mercifully be pleased to listen unto us, while in lowly reverence we come, owning our guilt, with our obligations, and entreating thy gracious aid. It is through the merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we draw near to address thee. On what other ground can we venture into thy presence? Thou only art holy. Evil shall not dwell with thee, neither shall the doers of evil stand in thy sight. The imaginations of our hearts have been evil, and that continually. We are all as an unclean thing. Our righteousness is but as filthy rags. We all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away. We have wearied thy patience; we have misapplied thy gifts: we have resisted thy government: we have quenched thy Spirit, and in the presumption of our hearts we have said, Who is the Almighty that we should serve him; and what profit is there, if we pray unto him? O Lord, most merciful and holy, enter not into judgment with us. For the sake of him who poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, let us now obtain thy favour, which is better than life, and hereafter let us be numbered among thy saints in glory. Our sins have come between thee and our souls, intercepting the light of thy counten-

ance; do thou, we beseech thee, blot them out as a cloud, and our transgressions as a thick cloud; and may we return unto thee, for thou hast redeemed us. By all our felt obligations as creatures, by all the dealings of thy providence, by all the constraining influences of thy word and Spirit, by the cords of a man, and by the bands of love, do thou draw us near to thyself, the blessed fountain of happiness and peace. Be thou henceforth our portion: and let thy law be our delight. May frequent communion with thee hallow our intercourse with the world. Like thy servant Moses, may we endure as seeing him who is invisible. Like Caleb, may we follow the Lord fully; and may our resolution, like that of Joshua, be, that whatever others may do, as for us and our house, we will serve the Lord. O God of our fathers, we humbly implore that, as a family, we may see much of thy goodness in the land of the living, and that thou mayest prepare our hearts by thy grace for the changes that are sooner or later to befall us. We cannot penetrate the veil that hides the future. We know not what a day may bring forth. Soon our faith may be severely tried by prosperity or by adversity. Soon we may be scattered by providence, or separated by death. Shepherd of Israel, go thou before our face, prepare our way before us. Hold up our goings, and we shall be safe. Preserve us from the error of the wicked, and our feet shall not slide. What thou givest, may we receive with humble gratitude; what thou takest away, may we resign with meekness and patience. Avoiding the extremes to which our sinful nature is prone, may we neither despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked of him. Grant unto us, we beseech thee, a happy issue out of all our afflictions; and, at death, an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Fit us for meeting with thee our final judge; and as this morning we have risen from a bed of refreshing sleep, to praise thee in the land of the living, O may we, on the morning of the resurrection, be raised from the bed of death, a rejoicing family, to give praise unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS XIII.

REMARKS.

The subject presented to us from the first to the end of the seventh verse of this chapter, is one of great importance to the welfare of society. It is one, also, on which questions of extreme difficulty may be raised, in the handling of which the utmost delicacy is required. The times during which the Christian church was first formed, were times of trouble and commotion; there was danger, therefore, lest the members of the church should, from ignorance of duty, involve themselves in civil broils. This danger was increased by the circumstance that, while the church was itself a kingdom in the midst of other kingdoms, owning Christ for its Prince and Lawgiver, the limits of the allegiance of its members to earthly, and especially to Pagan rulers, were liable, through mistaken zeal, to be infringed. Under these circumstances, the apostle lays down, in a clear and comprehensive manner, certain principles and precepts for observance. While he defines indirectly the duties of the civil ruler, declaring that he is designed to be 'not a terror to good works, but to the evil;' and that 'he is the minister of God for good,' while he shows what every government *ought to be*, he propounds a general rule, enjoining every soul to be subject to the *existing* government. The reason on which this rule is founded, is a solemn one—and one not rashly to be set aside: 'for,' says he, 'there is no power but of God; the powers that be, are ordained of God.' The Almighty is the author of order in the world. Without civil government, confusion and every evil work would ensue. God, therefore, ordains its existence. When it is just and lawful, it exists by his will and with his approbation; when it is the reverse, it exists by his providential permission. 'Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.' This, as a plain practical rule, is sufficient for the guidance of the Christian. Cases may be supposed, and cases may arise, in which profligate and unprincipled rulers inflict the bitterest wrongs on society. And it may be asked, Is not the Christian justified in such cases, if he unite with others in resisting the power? to this question, it may be answered, that he will do well first to consider that a government of this kind is self-destructive, and will contrive, ere long, to ruin itself without his assistance; that God, in his providence, has a thousand ways of removing or of correcting it; that rebellion is the most fearful of evils, involving a lengthened train of miseries, and retarding, it may be, for centuries the progress of improvement; that all security is at an end when individuals assume the right to determine when it is that resistance becomes a duty. If the Christian weigh seriously with himself these and other considerations of the kind, he will not hastily meddle with those who are given to change; but will bear patiently, and 'be subject not only for wrath, but for conscience sake.' One thing, however, is indisputable—that though we may *endure wrong*, we are never to commit wrong, in

obedience to the command of rulers. Our duty to God forbids us to do ought that is at variance with his word and will, however high the earthly authority that enjoins it. Like Daniel, we must resist the bidding, and brave the wrath of princes, rather than rob God of his glory. Like Peter, we must obey God rather than man. The remainder of the chapter defines and recommends the duties of justice and benevolence. It enjoins also a diligent preparation for eternity, by putting off the works of darkness, and putting on the armour of light.

Let us, then, honour God, by honouring the ordinance of civil government which he has appointed. Let us obey kings and them that are set in authority, that we may live quiet and peaceable lives under them, in all godliness and honesty. Let us love the brethren, and do good to all men as we have opportunity. Let us cultivate purity of heart and life—looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, who searchest the hearts and triest the reins of the children of men, we bow before thee as sinners, who stand in need of pardon and of peace. Convinced of our danger, we flee for refuge to lay hold of the hope that is set before us. In Christ Jesus once crucified but now crowned, thou art declaring thyself to be just, and the justifier of him that believeth. Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief. In him we rejoice; Lord, let our joy be unspeakable and full of glory. Behold God is our salvation; we will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song. Therefore, with joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation. We are the partakers of numberless gifts; but Christ the Lord is thy unspeakable gift. O may we prize and appropriate him as the treasure of our souls, as the source of our present and our endless joy. If there be any amongst us who have not yet received him as a Saviour from sin, and a teacher of holiness, do thou, in thy great pity and compassion, pour out on the erring soul a spirit of repentance, unite savingly to him, and turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Those amongst us who have experienced the blessed change, do thou graciously strengthen and encourage. Send forth thy light and thy truth, and let them be our guides. And may our path be that of the just, shining more and more unto the perfect day. May the love of Christ constrain us, so that we henceforth live not unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us and rose again. O for a livelier sense of the debt we owe unto him, that we may glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits which are his. O for a larger measure of his love within us, that meek-

ness, temperance, brotherly-kindness, and charity may shed their lustre and their loveliness over every day of our lives. O that Christ were not only formed in us the hope of glory, but that we were found growing up into spiritual perfection. While we thus pray for ourselves, we plead with thee, as the great Father of all, in behalf also of our friends. Be thou to them a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Wherever they dwell, let them abide under the shadow of thy wing. In the hour of temptation, cover thou them with thy feathers; and in the time of trouble, hide them in thy pavilion. Grant that they and we may be so kept from the follies to which we are prone, and so assisted in the duties to which we are called—so impressed by thy fear, and so cheered by thy promise, that after having finished our course with joy, we may enter into the blessed inheritance, there to be ever with the Lord. Prepare, we beseech thee, a people for serving thee on earth, and for enjoying thee in heaven. Succour and crown the labours of thy missionaries and ministers in every land of the world. Give thy Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. We commit ourselves to thy care during the dark and defenceless watches of the night: ascribing to thee all honour and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXI.

SCRIPTURE—JOB XXXVIII.

REMARKS.

How ignorant is man, even after he has received all the learning of the schools, the gracious teachings of divine providence, yea, and the experience of a lifetime, a learning the most profound, an experience the most varied, and a lifetime the most prolonged! And yet how proud of his knowledge, which is but ignorance; how conceited of his wisdom, which is but folly; how vain of the glow-worm glimmerings of his intellect, which serve but to show the shadows by which we are surrounded, to manifest the gloom in which our origin, our being, our destiny, are shrouded; and yet how fond of speculating upon the most mysterious subjects, enunciating, with oracular dogmatism, his baseless speculations, as if they were inspired verities, and, instead of dashing back the shadows which envelope the most interesting problems, do but 'darken counsel by words without knowledge,' ver. 2.

Of God and his ways, his authoritative will and his moral works, we know nothing absolutely, nothing but what he has himself most graciously condescended to reveal unto us in his word. And what he has

revealed was made known not to excite a vain spirit of speculation, or gratify an idle curiosity; but to convince us of our own ignorance and folly, and thus teach us to confide in the wisdom and knowledge of God; to manifest unto us his glorious perfections, and thus induce us to love, seek, and obey him, that so, by the doctrines, sacraments, and discipline of his church, he might prepare us for the enjoyment of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, but reserved in heaven for all who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. This is the only proper end of knowledge: for 'though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity'—love to God, love to man, love to truth and holiness—I am become as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal; and though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and have not charity, I am nothing, and nothing shall it profit me in my relation to eternity. The man who knows Jesus as the Saviour of sinners, God as the Father of mercies, the Spirit as the Comforter, the Guide, and Sanctifier, and the bible as the law of the kingdom, the charter of his inheritance, and the standard of his actions, knows enough for real utility, for domestic peace, for personal comfort, for social purposes, and for secular advancement; and knows, besides, all that can enlighten, justify, sanctify, and save his soul. Let us, then, acquaint ourselves with the truth revealed in God's word, for that is the science of heaven, the knowledge fitted for eternity.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish; but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. We thank thee with united voices this morning, that in thy good providence, and of thy sparing mercy, we have had our lives prolonged to behold the light of a new day. And now again we desire to approach thee through the new and living way, into the holiest of all, even our Lord Jesus Christ, and pray that we may obtain mercy to pardon and grace to help us in every time of need. Impart unto us of the grace of thy Spirit, whereby we may be enabled throughout this day to serve thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, even amidst the secularities of this life. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, may we do all things to thy glory. And with singleness of eye looking forward to eternity, may we by thy grace be enabled to use this world as not abusing.

it; to weep as though we wept not, to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and to buy as though we possessed not, seeing that the fashion of this world passeth away. And this we likewise pray, that our love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all judgment, that we may discern things that differ, and approve things that are excellent; that we may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. We thank thee for the glad tidings of salvation which have reached our ears, and we pray thee to send them home to our hearts. We bless thee that it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief. O may he of God be made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. May we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, through the exceeding riches of thy grace, which have abounded towards us through Jesus Christ our Lord. We do bless thee that thou hast laid our help upon one who is mighty and able to save; yea, able to save to the very uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Thou hast made him, who knew no sin, to be a sin-offering for sinners; so in like manner do thou make us, who of ourselves know no righteousness, to be made the righteousness of God in him, that being justified freely through thy grace in him, we may be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Preserve us during this day from all danger. Lead us not into temptation; but preserve us from evil. Bring us home again after our dispersion, not one of us being absent through the influence of sin or the occurrence of calamity, that as now we cast ourselves upon thy care, so then we may thank thy fatherly guidance and protection. These our prayers are now before thee. Hear us in mercy, forgive us and do us good, for the sake of Christ Jesus thy Son, to whom, with thee the Father, and the blessed Spirit, one God, be ascribed all praise, world without end. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXIII.

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS XIV.

REMARKS.

'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity,' when that unity is based upon the truth, cemented by love, and directed by a tender regard to the rights of conscience! The great source of dissension in religious matters, arising from our pride and ignorance, is when men, presuming to be lords over God's heritage, exalt things in themselves indifferent, and not enjoined in the word of God, into matters of essential moment and of stringent obligation, make them terms of communion, standards of the soundness of faith, and tests of the pureness of morals. What God has revealed, that let us believe; what he has enjoined, that let us obey; what he has sanctioned, that let us approve and observe: but what he has not revealed, that let us not introduce into the public formularies of the faith; what he has not enjoined, that let us never impose upon the consciences of our brethren; and what he has not authoritatively laid down as a fundamental article of faith or morals, let us never suffer to divide us from our brethren in Christ Jesus. 'Holy scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or to be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.' But even when a weak brother, in his ignorance, deems a thing in itself indifferent to be so important as to demand and deserve compliance, let us not despise him or hold him up to ridicule, for he but obeys the voice of conscience, whose mandates are at all times possessed of sovereign authority. Rather let us esteem him the more for his sacred regard to the rights of conscience; and in our intercourse with him, let us remember, that according to the principles laid down by Paul, it is the strong who is to yield to the weak, and not the weak to the strong. But, then, neither let us fancy that whatever conscience commands is therefore right, for conscience itself may be in error. The word of God, and not conscience, is our rule of faith, our law of life, our test of character. Still, to the individual himself, conscience is a sovereign. We may sin by following her mandates, and do so when we act against the word of God; but we must sin whenever we disobey conscience, because then, in that case, we disobey what at the moment we believe to be the voice of God. The sin here, however, consists not in following the dictates of conscience, but in suffering conscience to remain in error. 'He that doubteth is damned,' if he yet persist in doing that of which conscience has disapproved, for this manifestly is not of faith, and 'whatever is not of faith is sin.' Happy, then, is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth; but happier he that alloweth nought but what is sanctioned in the word of God.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, who art the Father of all men

cies, the God of all grace, the giver of every good and perfect gift, in approaching thee we rejoice with trembling that this is thy name, and thy memorial to all generations, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty. O do thou enable us to estimate aright the obligations under which thy mercy has laid us. Thou hast redeemed us not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. May the love of Christ then constrain us to live no longer unto ourselves, but to him who died for us and rose again. Buried with him, by baptism, into death, like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so may we walk in newness of life. May our old man be crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, that henceforth we may not serve sin. May the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, appear unto us, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live holily, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Christ Jesus, who gave himself for us, that he might cleanse us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. We must truly confess, that in many things we transgress thy most holy law, and times and ways without number provoke thee to wrath against us. But, O Lord, mind not against us former sins, but have mercy upon us according to thy loving-kindness. According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out our transgressions. Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity, and cleanse us from our sins. Hide thy face from our sins, and blot out all our iniquities. Create in us clean hearts, O Lord, and renew right spirits within us. Cast us not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from us. Restore unto us the joy of thy salvation, and uphold us with thy free Spirit. Do thou sprinkle clean water upon us, that we may be clean from all our filthiness, and from all our defilements do thou cleanse us. A new heart, also, do thou give us, and a new spirit do thou put within us, and do thou take away the hard and stony heart out of our flesh, and give unto us an heart of flesh, upon which do thou write thy law, and cause us to walk in thy statutes, and keep thy judgments and do them. O do thou implant in our hearts that love which is the fulfilling of

the law, a supreme love unto thee, and a love unto our neighbour even as unto ourselves, manifesting itself in doing unto him what we wish that he should do unto us. May we have a tender regard to our brother's comfort, and even consent to sacrifice our own rights, and abridge our own liberties, rather than offend and cause him to stumble. O Lord, we pray for all lawfully constituted authority throughout the world, but especially for thy servant our sovereign. Do thou now enable us to thank thee in a becoming manner for the preservation of the past day. Forgive all the sins we have committed. O let thy good hand be around us this night. May we lie down in peace, taking our quiet rest under the shadow of thy wing. These our prayers we present, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXIX.

SCRIPTURE—JOB XL.

REMARKS.

It might appear, at first sight, impossible that any man who verbally acknowledges the being of a God, infinite in knowledge and wisdom as in all perfection, should even, by the most indirect inference, so much as seem to insinuate any lack of wisdom or knowledge in the all-wise and all-knowing Jehovah, or any defect of practical prudence, propriety, or fitness, in any of his works, his ways, his will; and yet have we not often caught ourselves wondering at God's dealing with ourselves or others? Now, were we closely to inspect, minutely to analyse, our feelings at such times, we should generally find that they were excited by some distrust of God's wisdom, and were connected with some disbelief of his love. To repress such daring presumption, it were well that we should remember God's language to Job in the second verse of this chapter. Yet no censure, however severe, no amount of mere secular knowledge, however varied and profound, can ever enable us fully to repress such inveterate cavilling at the dispensations of God. Yea, while smarting under the folly of believing ourselves wiser than he, we may often be tempted, like Jonah in his controversy with God, to say, 'I do well' thus to think and thus to act. But when God, by his Spirit, has convinced us of his wisdom and our folly, his goodness and our baseness, his mercy and our guilt, we learn to abase ourselves in the silence of self-condemnation, and leave all things to the wisdom and goodness of our benign Father, saying with Job, in the fourth and fifth verses of this chapter, &c. Vast, mysterious, and magnificent are the works of our God, and most worthy of our contemplation and study; but how much more worthy of our intensest contemplation and

our profoundest study is the great and the glorious Jehovah himself! Yet there is no way by which we can know God except by knowing Jesus, 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him. But, moreover, the only knowledge of God which does not overwhelm us with its immensity, and by its appalling bearings upon our own destiny, is the knowledge of God manifest in the flesh. God, as seen without Christ, is only a Being of almighty power, inexorable rigour, inflexible justice, untainted holiness, unimpeachable veracity, immutable resolution, and intense irreconcilable hatred towards sin; and all this, if seen and believed, can be only appalling to the sinner. For God's almightiness may be exerted to punish, his justice to condemn, his rigour to refuse our prayers, his holiness to repel our approaches, and his veracity to inflict the threatened penalty; but when God is seen in Christ, there is power to protect us—justice to demand satisfaction but once, and that once for all, in the sacrifice of Jesus—holiness to impart unto us of the divine nature—form and fashion us for fellowship with himself in glory—and veracity to implement all his promises to Jesus, and in Jesus to us. Such is God as seen in Christ. And does he not deserve our contemplation, our trust, our love?

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, thou art exceeding great, and works by thee are done which are to be had in remembrance. From everlasting to everlasting thou art God, filling space with thine immensity, and eternity with thy duration. How truly may we take up, each one of us for himself, the language of thy servant, and say, Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me; yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. We thank thee, O Lord, for the rest and preservation of the past night. It is of thy gracious and providential care, of thy fatherly love and goodness, that we have been ushered into the light of a new day, and in the possession and enjoyment of such manifold mercies of which we are so very undeserving. O that we might remember our obligations unto the Lord, and our duties to God our Saviour! We go forth this day to our varied engagements, and avocations of life. We know not the snares and pit-falls by which our path is environed, the temptations and the dangers by which we may be assailed. We know not the bereavements, the pains, the perils, we may be

called upon to encounter, and it may be to endure. We, therefore, seek to cast ourselves upon thy care; and we pray that as our Father in Christ thou wouldst strengthen us for duty, fortify us for trial, shield us from danger, and succour us in the hour of need. Ward off every stroke of calamity, we pray thee, or soften its fall, or strengthen our hearts to bear it; humble our wills to acquiesce in it, and sanctify it to our spiritual improvement and growth in grace. And that we may be the less exposed to the sorrows and bereavements of this life, and also the better disposed towards eternity, teach, and by thy grace enable us to wean ourselves from created enjoyments, and to set our hearts upon thee, our imperishable treasure, that changeth not. And seeing that while we are here, in obedience to thy law, we must engage in the avocations of this world, we pray thee to bless our lawful endeavours in our lawful callings, that we may have food and clothing, and that our hearts may bless the Lord. In our respective relations and various walks in life, that we may be enabled to perform our duties to thee, our neighbour, and ourselves; that we may do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with thee, our God, O do thou endow us very richly with the special gifts of thy Spirit. May our sins, which are many, be blotted out, and may the blood of Jesus cleanse us from their stain. United to him by a true and living faith, may we have peace with God, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Renouncing all false confidences, may we place our sole dependence upon his merits and mediation alone. As now we separate for the day, be thou, O our God, never separate from one of us; but be ever at our right hand and at our left, our God, our guide, our stay. Bring us home again in peace in the evening, in thy good pleasure, that as now we implore thy presence and protection, so then we may celebrate thy praise, and, with grateful hearts, return thee due thanksgivings, as even now, also, we do through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLIX.

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS XV.

REMARKS.

If God hath exalted us above others in any attainments, we ought so to conjoin these gifts with humility and gratitude, as, in our feelings towards God, to manifest our thankfulness for his distinguishing grace; and in our intercourse with mankind, to re-

lamp to our path. We look to thee for strength and guidance this day. O Lord, it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps; lead thou us, then, in the way in which we ought to go; keep us from the paths in which destroyers walk; and let all the trials which we have to encounter this day tend, through thy blessing, to prepare us for thy blessed rest above; and all we ask is for the great Redeemer's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRaise—PSALM CXIX. 17—20.

SCRIPTURE—1 COR. II.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—5. What a noble pattern of a Christian minister was the apostle Paul! With what simplicity of mind and unwearied diligence did he labour in his Master's cause! He had ever but one end in view, which was, the declaring unto men the testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ and him crucified: and this testimony he delivered to the Corinthians, and every where else, without the smallest parade of human oratory or human learning. Christ was the centre and the sun of his preaching; and knowing that this was God's appointed method for the salvation of men, he was fully assured, that wherever it was set forth, even in the most unadorned manner, it would be blessed for the conversion of as many as had been ordained to eternal life. He was most solicitous that the faith of the Corinthians should stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God; and it was this feeling which often oppressed him with fear and trembling, lest his infirmity should hinder his success, or in any way thwart the glorious doctrines which he promulgated. It is impossible, but that the ministrations of such a devoted servant of Christ should be eminently successful. He tells us they were so; for his speech was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Ver. 6—9. Let us mark the import of the wisdom of which the apostle here speaks. It is no other than the gospel of the grace of God, which, as a grand scheme of divine contrivance, signally displays the manifold wisdom of God, and is suited, designed, and blessed for making men wise unto salvation, through faith in a crucified Saviour. This wisdom is very different from the wisdom of the men of this world, whose various devices for propitiating the favour of God, and making corrupt man better, are trifling and vain, and will perish with themselves. It is the wisdom of God in a mystery, being too deep and unsearchable to be fully comprehended by any created being, and too spiritual and holy to be duly understood and received by men of carnal minds. The Mosaic dispensation only conveyed some obscure intimations of it. It was hidden under Jewish types and shadows. In a word, it was ordained and intended by God, before the world began, as the scheme by which he should conduct his chosen people to the enjoyment

of salvation here, and of eternal glory hereafter. Proud, self-righteous men may despise this mystery as foolishness; yet all who are perfect, that is, all who are savingly enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and have attained to some considerable measure of knowledge and grace, through their acquaintance with it, regard it as the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; and as providing blessings for all who cordially embrace it, which far surpass any thing that has been seen, or heard, or imagined by men. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' Ver. 10—13. Even the apostles themselves did not discover the mystery of divine wisdom in the redemption of sinners by the incarnation, righteousness, atoning sacrifice, and mediation of God's coequal Son, by their own sagacity; but God revealed it to them by his Spirit; for that divine agent alone knoweth the deep things of God, and therefore none but he can discover them savingly and effectually to the soul of the sinner; just as no man knoweth and can reveal the thoughts and secret purposes of a man's heart, save the spirit of man which is in him. What need have we all to remember this vital truth of the gospel! Let it, then, be our daily fervent prayer, that the Lord would pour down the Holy Ghost upon us, to lead us into all the truth, and to make us savingly acquainted with that mystery of godliness which he has devised for our salvation. Ver. 14—16. How humbling, yet how true are these words, 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' Though the spiritual things which the Holy Ghost reveals in the scripture, be placed in the clearest light before the minds of unregenerate men, yet they do not embrace and approve of them, because through the darkness, pride, and depravity of their carnal hearts, they account them uninteresting, unnecessary, inconsistent, or absurd; yea, they are under a moral incapacity of understanding them in a truly spiritual and practical manner, because sin has deprived them of the power of spiritual discernment, and of all spiritual relish. It is widely different with those, however, who have been renewed in the spirit of their minds. Having been led into an acquaintance with divine things by the Holy Spirit, they are capable of forming a right judgment concerning all that relates to God's way of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ, they can distinguish truth from error in every thing connected with that all-important matter; they discern a heavenly glory in all its parts; and they feel their transforming power within them.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we adore and praise thee as the great parent of mercies. We bless thee for life, and health, and every temporal comfort we possess. Above all, we thank thee for the inestimable religious privileges which we enjoy in the happy land wherein we dwell. Thou hast sent the glad tidings of thy great salvation to this

and strength, and soundness of mind. May the everlasting arms ever be underneath us, and the banner over us be love. When we pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death, be thou our guide and protector; and at length do thou receive us into glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI.

SCRIPTURE—JOB XLII.

REMARKS.

The concluding chapter of this beautiful poem affords an encouraging proof that the Lord our God is merciful and very gracious, and that though he may try his servants for a while for the perfecting of their faith, he will never finally forsake the man whose hope is towards him, and who, in humble dependence on divine grace, hath said to himself with Job, 'though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' In verse 3d, the now humbled patriarch repeats, in substance, with feelings of the deepest self-abasement, the pregnant words in which God had first addressed him from the midst of the whirlwind. 'Who, indeed, am I,' he exclaims, 'that hide counsel without knowledge, that pretend wisdom without understanding? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.' In the same spirit of unfeigned humility, the patriarch alludes, in the 4th verse, to the words in which Jehovah had rebuked his presumptuous confidence when he thus addressed him: 'gird up thy loins now like a man: and I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.' Conscious, at length, of his utter inability to make answer unto God, the patriarch, from the depths of a subdued spirit, pours forth the fervent and affecting prayer, 'hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me;' as if he had said, 'O God, I am now convinced that I know nothing, that the wisdom on which I plumed myself is the veriest foolishness, and that it becomes me, therefore, to learn of thee, that I may obtain true wisdom. I will ask of thee, then, O God, and do thou declare unto me the things that are too deep, that I may be able to understand them.' The captivity of Job, spoken of in the 10th verse, is a figurative expression for the deep affliction with which God had visited him. The names given to his daughters, literally 'days upon days,' 'Cassia,' the plant of aromatic fame, and 'the flowing horn,' or 'horn of plenty,' are expressive of the rich blessings which God caused at length to be poured into his lap, and also of the gladness of heart with which it had been farther given to him to enjoy the bounties of a benign providence. Applying Job's expressions in a spiritual sense, deeply and feelingly may every sincere Christian exclaim, 'how little can be known of God by the hearing of the ear!' While *our knowledge* of him is confined to what others can

teach us, while there is no light in our minds but that which entereth from the outer world, we are destitute of the knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation, and we are destitute of the light which is also our life. It is only when God, by his Spirit, revealeth himself in the hidden man of the heart, when he inscribes his laws on our consciences, and writes his statutes on our inward parts, when he discovers to us himself, both in the awful effulgence of his immaculate purity, and in the more subdued light of his unsearchable mercy, that we truly know the depths into which we have fallen, that we see and feel our utter vileness, and that we are capable of exclaiming, in the affecting words of Job, under an awful consciousness of their meaning, 'we abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes.' O that we could thus see God as he is, that he would thus declare himself unto us by the teaching of his Spirit, that he would thus give us that view of our own unworthiness, through which we shall be led, with becoming fervour, to desire an everlasting righteousness, and in fine, that he would work in us that deep conviction of our own weakness, which shall constrain us to lay hold on the strength of omnipotence, ver. 7, &c. How much may we be indebted to the prayers of our fellow-Christians, even of those of whom, in our presumption, we have judged most harshly, and how urgently and impressively, therefore, are we called on to have fervent charity towards all men, and to remember our brethren at a throne of grace, verses 9, &c. Whatever portion the Christian may obtain in the world that now is, it is such a portion as God sees to be most conducive to his everlasting good; and his, assuredly, is that better part which shall never be taken from him, even the heavenly inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The Lord himself is the Christian's sufficiency; his everlasting portion is the God of Jacob.

PRAYER.

Almighty and everlasting God, thou rulest supreme in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of this earth. None can stay thy hand from working, or say unto thee effectually, What doest thou? Thou art our creator, and preserver, our Lord, and rightful proprietor. In our bodies and in our never-dying spirits we are thine. Our perishable part is fearfully and wonderfully made by thee. There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of thee the Almighty hath given him understanding. Impress this consideration deeply and permanently on our hearts, and may we be brought to exclaim, in a distinct and grateful consciousness of dependence, with thy servant of old, Here I am, let the Lord do with me whatsoever seemeth good in his sight. Thou art, O Lord, possessed of almighty power, so that thou canst do every thing, and the whole universe is thine, so that thou mayest righteously act according to thy sovereign will and pleasure. We are before thee as clay in the hands of the

potter. And yet, O searcher of hearts, from whom no thought can be withholden, thou knowest how much dissatisfaction, and ingratitude, and faithlessness, has characterised our past history, and thou hast recorded all the hard thoughts which we have sinfully entertained respecting thy providential dealings towards us. We have been too prone to forget our unworthiness of even the least of all thy mercies, thine unwillingness to afflict or grieve the children of men, and the divine inscrutableness of thy ways; and we have presumed too often to utter things which we understood not, and to pry into the secret things which belong to the Lord alone. But now, we would desire, O merciful God, with repentant and humbled hearts, to return unto thee. Beholding ourselves in all the ignorance, and guilt, and depravity which cleave to us by nature; and thee in all the mercy, and light, and purity, and justice of thy glorious character; we would feel constrained to adopt the language of the ancient penitent, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. Lead us, we beseech thee, to a just and believing view of thyself, and especially may we be enabled to claim thee as our own God in Christ. May we enjoy the blessedness of thy chosen ones, who feel that all things work together for their good, that thou lovest whom thou chastisest, and scourgest every son whom thou receivest. Compassionate the condition of the afflicted. Bless and sanctify all their trials to thy glory and their spiritual good, and produce in them a resigned and confiding temper of mind. May no evil befall us, or any of those who are near and dear to us, this day. Keep us constantly in thy fear and love; and may our death be that of the righteous. Our heart's desire and prayer for all men is that they may be saved. Hasten the coming of Messiah's kingdom; and to thee the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we will ascribe all praise, dominion, and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM C. (*First Version.*)

SCRIPTURE—ROMANS XVI.

REMARKS.

There is little in this chapter which requires explanation. Phebe, called a servant of the church of Cenchrea, was properly a deaconess of that church. In the east, women were not permitted to mix in the society of men, but were, for the most part, kept secluded in separate apartments, to which no stranger could have access. It became, therefore, highly

important for the church to have deaconesses as well as deacons, in order that the sick or indigent of the female sex might have their necessities ministered unto, by persons whose attendance upon them should involve no breach of decorum. The same order of office-bearers seems to be alluded to by Paul in his first epistle to Timothy. The persons spoken of in the 17th and 18th verses, as causing divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine of Christ, were probably those who enforced the institutions of Moses, lest they should suffer persecution from the unbelieving Jews, or those who, by abusing their Christian liberty, in partaking of sacrifices offered to idols, laid a snare in the way of their weaker brethren. Of both these classes of persons it might be justly said, that they served not the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, and that they had regard rather to the means of pampering their fleshly appetites.

The chapter, considered in a practical point of view, is replete with instruction. It breathes throughout the genuine spirit of catholic Christianity. The absent members of Christ's spiritual body dwell in the affectionate recollections of the apostle; he makes grateful remembrance of their several special claims upon his regard, and of the services done by them to the cause of Christ; distance divides them not from his brotherly love. The interest which he shows in the welfare of the whole Roman church, and also the greetings transmitted by him, from the churches among which he was sojourning at the time when he wrote his epistle, to brethren whom, in all probability, they had never seen in the flesh, point out to us, in the liveliest colours, the feelings and sympathies by which we must be actuated, if we are genuine disciples of the Lord Jesus, if we have, in truth, been made partakers of the Spirit of Christ. Behold, exclaimed the heathen, in the pure times of the primitive church, behold these Christians how they love one another! Reader, it is only when the spirit of catholic brotherly love shall return to the church, and to each individual member thereof; when between us and Christians in every part of the world, whatever be their nation, or kindred, or tongue, whether they dwell beneath the fires of a tropical sun, or amid the perpetual snows of an arctic winter, there is felt to exist a tie of brotherhood, stronger, infinitely, than are the ties of flesh and blood, a tie which death itself can neither break nor unloose,—it is then, only, that the vine which the Lord planted in our land shall take deep root, and really flourish, covering the hills with its shadow, having its boughs like the goodly cedars, and sending them forth unto the sea, and its branches unto the river.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art God, and we will bless thee; thou art our fathers' God, and we will exalt thy name together. Thou art the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, of those who love and serve thee on the earth, and of all who in heaven are inheriting the promises; but in an especial manner thou art the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We adore and bless thee as the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever

press these unchristian rivalries, the apostle remonstrates with his converts on the sinfulness of a conduct so injurious to themselves, and to the holy religion they professed. He points out the source, the inconsistency, the evil effects now, and the bitter consequences hereafter, of the conduct he deprecates; and then directs them to the only means by which these evils may be remedied, and their consequences prevented.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

If believers would desire to make attainments in scriptural knowledge, it must be pursued in the way of holiness and of faith. For the man who has made the highest attainments in spirituality of mind, will also be the best instructed in the deep things of God. 'Mere knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth.' If any man love God, the same is known of him; and the secret of the Lord is with such as fear him, and he will show them his covenant. Whatever tends to carnalize the mind, or withdraw the heart and affections from God, ought to be carefully avoided, even though in itself lawful, as the soul is thereby exposed to the wiles of satan, the evidence of a personal interest in Jesus is apt to be overshadowed; and that progress in the knowledge of God is retarded which might qualify the believer for higher degrees of perfection and happiness in heaven.

Satan often appears as an angel of light, especially to God's children, because in this form he can assail them unsuspected. In this character he tries to avert their faith and dependence from Christ, and to substitute in his stead *ministers*, who are but earthen vessels, or *ordinances*, which are only channels of grace, and satan cares not to what object their love and hope is transferred, provided he can deprive them of the true source of all their strength, an humble trust in God. How many has he thus deluded with a name to live, while they have in reality forsaken Christ, the true and only foundation of a sinner's hope; and on a mere profession of faith in his name, erected an edifice of a fair self-righteous morality, which will present as feeble a resistance to the storm of divine wrath, as wood, hay, or stubble to the devouring flame! 'Let no man deceive himself,' 'God is not mocked,' what profit is there in self-deception, if sinners cannot succeed in deceiving God. Better far to 'awake to righteousness, and no longer sin against themselves and God.' If our hearts be the temple of God, let us permit them to become the residence of the Holy Spirit. Let nothing unholy or that defileth be permitted to enter, but let the incense of praise, and the pure offering of a contrite spirit, be daily presented to Jehovah from the altar of the heart. But if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, whatever he may profess, that man is none of his. But whosoever possesses the meek and lowly Spirit of Jesus, is enriched with all the fullness of God. The wisdom of God instructs his ignorance; the strength of God is perfected in his weakness; the honour of God is the theme of his glorying; the unsearchable riches of Christ his unfailing treasury. In short, 'all things are his; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or

things to come, all are his; and he is Christ's, and Christ is God's.'

PRAYER.

Almighty God, before whom angels veil their faces with their wings, and seraphs bend in lowly adoration, bow down thine ear to the thanksgivings and supplications of thy guilty children, who would approach thee through Jesus Christ. Consume us not in the fire of thy holy indignation, but regard us with that favour and love which thou bearest to thine own. We thank thee, that we have an advocate with thee, even Jesus Christ, the righteous one, who has a fellow-feeling with all our infirmities, who knows the frailties of our frame, who sympathises in all our afflictions, whose plea is all-powerful, and whose advocacy is all-prevalent. Through him we approach with boldness to thy throne of grace to seek and obtain mercy; and to find grace to help us in our time of need. We would desire to place all our dependence, and build all our hope of salvation on the stone, the tried stone, the precious corner-stone, the sure foundation, which, in mercy and love, thou hast laid in Zion for thy believing people; for other foundation can no man lay, but that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. To whom thou, O God, hast entrusted the mighty work of our salvation, may we by faith intrust with the keeping of our souls. On whom thou hast laid the iniquities of us all, may we lay the burden of our sins, and our sorrows, and take his yoke which is easy, and his burden which is light. Through him may we find access by the Spirit unto thee, the Father, bound to thee, and to our Christian brethren, by him who is the corner-stone of the church of God; and on this pearl of great price, may we be enabled to rear an edifice adorned by the fruits of the Spirit, and reflecting the beauties of holiness. Permit us not to fall into the soul-ruinous sin of deceiving ourselves with a mere name to live, while we are in reality spiritually dead. Let us not make a Saviour of mere instruments and outward ordinances; but looking by faith, through the means of the God of all grace, may we value the earthen vessels as the blessed channels of communicating to our souls the pure waters of life which flow from the throne of God. May we obey them that are our spiritual overseers, and submit ourselves; for they watch for our souls, as they that must give account. Make our hearts, O God, the honoured temples of the Holy Ghost, that, by his indwelling and sanctifying power, we may become more and more qualified for dwelling for ever with the Lord, in the glorified and heavenly temple of the Zion

above. Enrich our souls with the treasures of grace; give us to be spiritually minded, which is life and peace. Make us heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus; this is all our salvation, and all our desire. And to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be ascribed all glory and praise, now, and for ever. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 12.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS IV.

REMARKS.

Solomon was fully alive to the importance and good effects of a religious education. He had himself possessed the advantage of being trained under the watchful eye of a pious father, who had taught him the commandments of God from his childhood. He esteemed these early lessons of wisdom as his greatest blessings, and desired to transmit them to his own children, and to future generations, as his most valuable legacy.

As life is the seed-time for eternity, so is childhood and youth the seed-time for riper years. According to the seed then sown will be the future fruit. 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' What duty can be more consonant with reason and scripture than that of the religious instruction of the young by their parents, their natural guardians? When professing Christian parents can trample under foot the most solemn vows—exhibit an utter destitution of Christian, if not of natural, affection, towards their offspring—set before them no holy example—instil into their youthful minds no sound religious principles—and disregard their spiritual interests, how can it be otherwise than that the rising generation should spring up a seed of evil doers—children that are corrupters—that they should prove forsakers of God, disobedient to parents, covenant-breakers, unruly? Each successive generation, copying the evil example of that which preceded, becomes in this manner more deeply depraved, departs farther from God, and at last, when their measure of iniquity is full, God is provoked to pour out his fury on the families and nation that call not on his name.

How awfully mistaken are those who act as if they thought true religion beneficial only for a dying man, a good preparative for such a change, but as rather detrimental than otherwise to a man's temporal prosperity! Even Christian parents entertain some false notion of this kind, as if to train up their offspring for heaven were to unfit them for the occupations and duties of life. Solomon's views of the effects of religion in this life are very different, ver. 7—14. The fear of God he had found to be the best safeguard against the indulgence of selfishness, covetousness, malice, wrath, envy, deceit, as well as against those grosser vices which entail shame and misery in this life on those who practise them. 'The curse

of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the righteous.'

But whatever lessons of moral instruction may be taught, and however diligently they may be inculcated, they will, for all spiritual good, prove vain, unless they be not only engraven on the memory, but impressed on the heart, by the stamp of the divine Spirit. Solomon was taught, by experience and observation, that the heart was the root of all evil, as well as the seat of holy principles of heavenly planting. 'Out of the heart proceed all evil thoughts;' and also out of the heart are the issues or springs of spiritual life. If the life would be reformed, it is necessary, first, that the heart be renewed, for according to the state of the heart will be the life. Purify this fountain, and all its streams, its thoughts, words, and actions, will be pure. Well, then, does Wisdom teach us, 'keep thy heart with all diligence.' It is of vital importance to the interests of the immortal soul, that a habit of ruling and governing the thoughts and dispositions of the heart be early acquired and diligently practised, that its evil propensities may be nipped in the bud before they attain maturity.

PRAYER.

Father of mercies and God of all grace, we would desire to kneel before thee, our Maker, and to offer thee up our humble tribute of gratitude and praise. Thou hast guarded us from all outward evil, watched over us with parental tenderness during the obscurity of night, and brought us in safety to the blessings of another day. We have laid us down and slept, for thou, Lord, hast caused us to dwell in safety. To thee we are indebted for all the temporal and spiritual blessings we enjoy. It is of thine infinite goodness that we have been born in a land where the sound of the gospel may be heard, and its privileges freely enjoyed. It is to thee we owe the advantages of a scriptural and godly education, whereby we have been taught to know our Creator in the days of our youth, and instructed in the way of everlasting life. Thou hast given us line upon line, and precept upon precept; and in the enjoyment of sabbath blessings and gospel ordinances, thou hast hedged in our path, so that we should not err from thy ways. Thou hast led us about, and instructed us, and kept us as the apple of thine eye. Well mightest thou say regarding us, What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done to it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes. Notwithstanding all thy tender solicitude and long-suffering forbearance, how unfruitful have we proved ourselves to be! Have we not refused to listen to the voice of heavenly wisdom? How have we hated instruction, and despised reproof, and disobeyed the voice of our teachers! How have we gone in the path of the

wicked, and followed the multitude to do evil! and breaking through all thy hedges, and bursting all the barriers of conscience, and scripture, and godly friends, and providential warnings, that opposed us in the indulgence of our ungodly inclinations, have we not drunk in iniquity as the ox drinketh up water? Our sins are highly aggravated, in that they have been committed against knowledge, light, truth, warnings, and all the means of grace, leaving us, O God, without an excuse to plead for our multiplied transgressions. Against thee, thee only have we sinned; for we acknowledge our transgressions; our sins are ever before us. We loathe ourselves in our own sight for our iniquities and abominations. Wash, then, us thoroughly from all our iniquity, and cleanse us from our sin; for though they be as scarlet, thou canst make them whiter than the snow; though they be red like crimson, thou canst make them pure as wool. Create within us clean hearts; renew a right spirit within us. O that the blood of Christ might be savingly applied by thy Spirit to purify the bitter fountain of the heart, to purge our consciences, renew our wills, and sanctify our natures, that their issues might be life for ever. Give us grace to exercise a godly jealousy over our thoughts, feelings, and words, that we may cease to do evil and learn to do well. Establish all our goings in the ways of holiness and eternal life, that we may be seduced by no temptations to turn aside either to the right hand or to the left. And may our path be yet that of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. All our supplications we present in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRaise—PSALM CV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—1 CORINTHIANS IV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The causes which led to the lamentable declension of the church of Corinth have been already adverted to. The task of removing them was both painful and delicate to the tender-hearted and humble apostle of the Gentiles. Painful, that it should have been requisite for him, who 'travailed in birth until Christ should be formed in them,' to administer reproof to his children in the faith; and delicate, lest, by provoking their enmity to himself and to the truth, he should sacrifice altogether the hope of advancing their farther good, and defeat the very ends he sought most earnestly to promote. Under the influence of such feelings and views most men would have deemed it prudent to refrain from giving offence,

under the plea that their future usefulness might be impeded. But the apostle Paul did not 'confer with flesh and blood,' but acted in the manner which he was persuaded fidelity to Christ, and love to the souls of the backsliding Corinthians, imperatively demanded.

Before animadverting directly on their heinous offences, he reluctantly enters into a vindication of his own character, in order to remove the injurious suspicions they entertained respecting the motives of his ministerial conduct. Necessity was laid upon him, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, to reprove, rebuke, correct, with all authority, as their conduct required, uninfluenced either by their praise or censure. Their censure he disregarded, for God was his Judge; their praise he sought not, for though he magnified his office, he did not exalt himself; so far otherwise, he wished both himself and them never to forget, that he and his friend Apollos, as well as all other ministers of Christ, had nothing to glory of. They were but instruments in God's hands—servants, stewards, ambassadors of Christ, whose commission they bore, and whose embassy they were bound faithfully to discharge. The worldly circumstances of the Corinthians was one of ease and comfort, honour and affluence; while his was, like his Master's, one of painful destitution and disinterested sufferings, rewarded by cold ingratitude and bitter persecution. By what motives, then, could he be actuated, but those of faithfulness to Christ, and love to the souls of men?

Well might the Corinthians be ashamed of their base ingratitude to him who thus toiled and suffered solely for their good. With singular tenderness of soul, and beautiful simplicity of language, the apostle, in verses fourteen and fifteen, hastens to overcome evil with good. His sole vengeance is love; all the retaliation he seeks is their salvation. A father's bowels yearn over them; and he expostulates with them as his beloved children, whom he would far rather reclaim to the ways of Christ, and to the paths of righteousness, by gentleness and affection, than by the painful rod of severity and rebuke.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The design of God, in all his works, is to advance and secure the glory of his own name. This great design should never be lost sight of, either by ministers, by congregations, or by individual Christians, and ought also to be carefully distinguished from the means and instruments employed to advance it. All other ends must be regarded as subordinate and inferior, and, if incompatible with this, must be renounced as unworthy and unsafe. Nothing can so dignify and exalt the creature, nothing can elevate its character and secure its happiness so effectually, as to deny selfish ends, and be devoted to God's glory. That soul enjoys the closest walk with God, which, in self-denying dependence on the Spirit of Christ, aims most simply at God's glory. This is the spring of all true and unreserved obedience. Whenever this high principle of the Christian character ceases to operate, the believer relapses into pride and vanity. Self becomes the object of his idolatrous pursuit; and he seeks the glory of others,

with the view thereby of promoting his own, and indulges a censorious and uncharitable spirit towards those whose views suit not his selfish and unholy ends. The conduct of Paul and of the Corinthians strikingly exemplify those very opposite characters. Aiming at God's glory in the salvation of souls, and denying himself, the former stands a bright pattern for the imitation of all who serve Christ, and especially of those who are put in trust with the ministry of the gospel. The latter stands a beacon on the fatal rock of self-righteous pride, lest believers should make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience.

PRAYER

O Lord, who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? We would give thanks at the remembrance of thy holiness and justice, thy mercy and grace, as unfolded in the work of our redemption. In thy cross, O blessed Jesus, we see mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace embracing each other, the glory of God exalted, and the rebellious sinner saved. Our souls, O Lord, would bless thee, and all that is within us would be stirred up to bless and magnify thy holy name, for thou forgivest all our iniquities; thou healest all our diseases; thou redeemest our lives from destruction; thou crownest us with loving-kindness and tender mercies. We have nothing that is good but what we have received from thy gracious hand; yet with thine own would we serve and glorify thee. We would not regard ourselves as our own property; we are thine, thou hast bought us with an infinite price, and we would desire to manifest our love to thee by glorifying thee in our bodies and spirits which are thine. Assist us, O Lord, in rendering to thee the true service of an undivided heart, for with such sacrifice thou art well pleased. Yet, alas! our consciences testify against us, that, during the past day, thy glory has not been our single or chief aim in all we have done. We have been endeavouring to serve God and mammon; or, alas! serving the world and ourselves to the utter exclusion of God from all our thoughts. And if our hearts condemn us, thou, who art greater than our hearts, and knowest all things, must condemn us also. We humbly confess, and with sorrow lament, how much we are influenced by the fear of the world's censure, or the love of the world's praise, by selfishness, and the love of carnal ease and security, and are thereby deterred from making any sacrifices of personal feeling or comfort for thy cause and glory. Pardon, O gracious God, our ingratitude, unbelief, and coldness of heart. Strengthen our faith, and augment our love to him who loved us, and gave himself a sacrifice for our

sins, that we may be constrained to live no longer to ourselves, but to him who died for us and rose again. Grant us holy boldness and confidence through the faith of Jesus, that we may count it all joy to bear our Lord's reproach, and rejoice if we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. We would desire to glory in nothing but in the cross of Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world. Forgive us all our sins, and hear, answer, and accept of our prayers and praises, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXI. 7.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS VIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

There can be little doubt that Christ is the person by whom we are here addressed. Whether or not the inspired penman was fully aware of the real scope and bearing of the language which the Holy Ghost put into his mouth, is a question not so easily determined; but to us who have the New Testament writings as a key to explain the mysteries of the Old, it can hardly admit of a doubt, that he who was known to the ancient saints as 'Wisdom,' the impersonation of wisdom, intelligence, and truth, was none other than the second person in the Godhead, the eternal 'Word,' 'the Truth,' 'the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.' Indeed there are many things in this chapter which it is impossible to apply to wisdom considered simply as an attribute of the divine nature; whilst there is no part of it that does not admit of an easy and obvious explanation, when we view it as the language of uncreated intelligence and Wisdom, addressed to the ignorant and guilty 'sons of men.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

It is grievous to think of the backwardness which there is in the human heart to receive the lessons of divine truth. Every other kind of instruction, even 'the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge,' is willingly listened to and greedily devoured; but for the words of eternal life, the intimation of God's love toward a fallen world, sinners have no relish and no appetite. Upon this subject, of all others, 'their ears are dull of hearing.' They speak of religion as a difficult and abstruse subject, and talk of the impossibility of arriving at any certain conclusion, when the most pious and learned men have differed so widely. This, however, is but a mere subterfuge. What is the real state of the case? In every question of duty, and in every thing that concerns the way of a sinner's salvation, the language of God's word is plain, intelligible, and emphatic. 'Doth not Wisdom cry, and understanding put forth her voice?' Does not the proclamation of God's mercy to sinners, and the free invitation to all to come unto the Saviour, stand forth broadly and legibly on every page of the inspired

word? And how precious are the words of Christ, to which sinners are thus turning a deaf ear! They are 'better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to them.' They speak to us of a reconciled Father, who, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life, gave up to the death his only begotten Son, that Son who 'was by him as one brought up with him, and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;' and who, in compliance with the will of his Father, came and tabernacled with men upon the earth, because 'his delights were with the sons of men.' Let us, then, reverently hearken to the counsels of infinite 'Wisdom,' even of Christ, when he counsels us to buy of him 'gold tried in the fire, that we may be rich, and white raiment, that we may be clothed, and eye-salve, that we may see.' And let us never forget, that 'whoso findeth Him, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, our heavenly Father, we desire this morning to bow ourselves down in humble reverence at the footstool of thy throne. We would remember that thou art in heaven, and we upon the earth; that thou art our Creator, and we the work of thy hands; that thou art from everlasting to everlasting, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and that we are of yesterday and know nothing. O Lord, make us duly sensible of our own ignorance and foolishness. Make us to see how far we have gone astray from the paths of true wisdom in forsaking God, the only permanent and satisfying portion of an immortal soul, and seeking for happiness in the empty and perishing joys of a vain world. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but we have neither known nor considered the hand that feeds us, and that is daily loading us with benefits. We acknowledge, O God, the guilt, as well as the foolishness, of our ways. With shame and confusion of face would we confess the sin with which we have been chargeable, in preferring the creature to the Creator, and postponing the claims of God to the calls of our own wicked and corrupt inclinations. O Lord, pardon our iniquity, for it is very great. Deal with us not in thy wrath; vex us not in thy hot displeasure. Leave us not to reap the consequences of our own pursuits, or to be filled with the fruits of our own devices; but save us with an everlasting salvation, and magnify thy power and grace in the midst of our abounding iniquity. O make us all monuments of thy redeeming mercy, and glorify thy great name in rescuing us from the bondage of corruption, and bringing us into the glorious liberty of thy children. We thank thee for the promise of the Holy Spirit. O may his influences be richly shed abroad in our hearts, purifying our affec-

tions, renewing our wills, and transforming us wholly into the divine image. May he implant and cherish within us every holy disposition, confirm every right resolution, and strengthen us for the discharge of every duty. We desire to feel more and more our absolute dependence on thy promised grace. Lord, we are weak and insufficient; we have no strength in ourselves. We are ever ready to be drawn away into the communion of sin by the snares and temptations of a world that lieth in wickedness; and if left to ourselves, we must infallibly make shipwreck of our faith, and come short of eternal life. But our dependence is on thee; our hope is in thy word. Leave us not, O Lord, nor forsake us. Make thy grace sufficient for us, and perfect thy strength in our weakness. We thank thee that we have been preserved throughout the past night, and brought to see the light of another day. Keep us throughout this day from evil. Defend us from every accident and danger. Preserve us especially from sin. In all our intercourse with our fellow-men, may we be enabled to conduct ourselves as the followers of the Lord Jesus. May we set a watch upon our lips, that we offend not with our tongue. May we be enabled to keep our heart with all diligence from the intrusion of every sinful thought. And in the midst of the business and the various pursuits of time, may we be enabled ever to bear upon our minds the grand realities of eternity. Hear us, O Lord, in these our supplications, and graciously accept of us and of our services, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI.

SCRIPTURE—1 CORINTHIANS V.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In this chapter the apostle takes notice of a gross scandal that had broken out in the Corinthian church, and gives authoritative directions for purging it away. He commands them, without delay, to cast out that wicked person from their communion, to 'deliver him to satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus,' i. e. to excommunicate him; to regard him no longer as a Christian, but as a subject of satan's kingdom; 'a heathen man and a publican.' And this they were to do, not only for the safety of the Christian body, but out of a regard to the best interests of the offender himself, that in him the 'flesh,' or carnal nature, might be 'destroyed,' and his 'spirit saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.' It seems strange that in these circumstances the Corinthians should be

'puffed up,' and not rather humbled and overwhelmed with grief. But at this time party disputes and jealousies ran high among them. 'One said, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos; and so eager were their feelings of partizanship, and so anxious was each contending faction to uphold the reputation and screen the delinquencies of their favourite leaders, of whom it is probable this incestuous person was one, that they rather gloried and made a boast of his extraordinary gifts, and plumed themselves on their connection with one so eminent as a teacher, than mourned over the flagrant wickedness by which their church had been polluted. 'Your glorying,' says Paul, 'is not good;' meaning that it is eminently the reverse. He then reminds them, that a 'little leaven leaveneth the whole lump;' that wickedness is contagious, and if not speedily checked, would soon spread and contaminate the whole body. That even as the Israelites searched for and put away all leaven out of their houses before partaking of the passover, so it became them for whom 'Christ, their passover, was slain,' to purge out all such wickedness from among them, in order to a comfortable and profitable communion with Christ, and with one another, either at the Lord's table, or in the ordinary exercises of worship. He tells them, moreover, that although it was impossible, without going out of the world altogether, wholly to avoid the society of grossly immoral persons, they should studiously shun the companionship of every man professing to be a 'brother,' who was notoriously addicted to any one of the gross sins which he enumerates.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How feeble is all human virtue without the restraining influence of the grace of God. In the case of the most heinous offender, the believer may behold what he himself might have been, had God only left him to the suggestions of his own corrupt heart. Let us, then, not be high-minded, but fear, and trust not to our own resolutions, but to the strength of promised grace. It is melancholy to think, that, even in this advanced period of the Christian church, we 'must needs go out of the world,' if we would escape the contact of wicked and profligate men. But although we cannot, in the ordinary intercourse of life, avoid mingling with such characters, let us be careful to shun their society as much as possible, seeing that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

PRAYER.

O Lord, to whom can we go but unto thee? thou hast the words of eternal life. Thou only canst pardon our sins and sanctify our natures; canst heal our backslidings, and give grace to help us in every time of need. We would approach thee this evening under a deep sense of our guilt and unworthiness. It is of thy great mercy that we have not, long ere this time, been cut down as cumberers of the ground, and had our portion assigned us with the workers of iniquity, in that place where thou hast forgotten to be gracious. But in the exercise of thy won-

drous forbearance and long-suffering, we are still spared in the land of the living, and in the place of hope. O may it not be to add iniquity unto iniquity, and to multiply provocation against thee, until thy long-suffering be exhausted, and thy Spirit cease to strive with us. May we esteem the time past of our lives more than sufficient to have wrought the will of the flesh, and resolve henceforth to live no longer the rest of our time in the flesh, to the lusts of man, but to the will of God. With deep humility and reverence would we acknowledge the sovereignty of thy grace in all thy dealings with the children of men. We feel that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. And if we have been saved from falling into those gross transgressions of which others of our fellow-creatures have been guilty, it is not because we are by nature better than they, or because we have done any thing to deserve thy grace, but only through the free and sovereign mercy of God, who alone maketh us to differ. O may we never lose the impression, that our hearts are by nature deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. And may we learn every day to lean less and less on the strength of our own resolutions, and more and more on the strength of promised grace. Grant, O heavenly Father, that we may not only have deeper convictions of the evil of sin, but livelier views of the power, and grace, and sufficiency of the Saviour. May Christ be every day more precious to us; and whilst we rest upon him all our hopes of pardon and acceptance, may our affections flow out towards him in lively gratitude for the great love wherewith he has loved us. O that his name and praise were universally known and proclaimed! Lord, let the time soon come when his kingdom shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Stir up in the hearts of all thy people a more ardent zeal for the glory of Christ, and the extension of his kingdom throughout the world. Bless all ministers and pastors in thy church; may they be wise to win souls unto Christ. And may a special blessing accompany the ministry of the word in our native land. Let thy Spirit descend like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth. O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of us, and grant us times of refreshing from thy presence. Bless, we beseech thee, all with whom we are connected, by whatever tie. Enrich their souls with the communications of thy grace, and make all things to work together for their good. Be merciful to the poor, the sick, the afflicted, and the dying.

effects, both here and hereafter, of this invaluable acquisition. Let us mark the directions which she gives us regarding these all-important matters. We must entertain her exhortations, and store them up in our memories; we must listen with eager attention to her precepts, and exert ourselves to comprehend them. Like men in earnest about the salvation of their souls, we must, above all, plead with God for the teaching of his Holy Spirit, that we may thereby be led into all the truth, supplicating with David, 'open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' As the knowledge which divine wisdom imparts is infinitely more precious and desirable than the most valuable earthly treasures, so we must desire it with far more avidity, and strive to be possessed of it with far more diligence and perseverance, than we would search for hidden stores of gold or silver. We must evince our esteem of it, by studiously seeking for it, as covetous men seek for money, seizing every opportunity of profiting in it, and pursuing such advantages as may occur for obtaining it, not relaxing our efforts though we do not immediately reach our object; but continuing to inquire, and search, and pray, and sparing no pains to ascertain what the will of the Lord is. If we act in this manner, what will be the result? Our labour will be abundantly rewarded; for 'we shall understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.' Indeed, the result could not be different, seeing the Lord has promised to grant wisdom to all who seek it in faith and earnestness, and has even stored it up in his beloved Son, for the very purpose of being communicated to his praying people. 'Our life is hid with Christ in God;' and 'in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' And when he vouchsafes to them his wisdom, in answer to their fervent supplications, they are enabled to keep the paths of judgment, and to understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path. Ver. 10—22. 'The first steps towards heavenly wisdom may be attended with difficulty, and seem unpleasant; but, it is here intimated, that when once wisdom has really obtained an entrance into the heart, it will become pleasant to the soul; and by its pleasantness, as well as its instructions, it will preserve the possessor from the destructive allurements of sin.' Manifold are the snares and temptations to which we are continually exposed; some of these proceed from our own deceitful and desperately wicked hearts; many of them from the world; and many more from the suggestions and wiles of the devil, 'who walketh about continually, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' But besides these abounding evils, which are ever ready to entangle and ruin us, we are encompassed on all hands with bad examples, and cunning seducers of both sexes; with men of reprobate minds, who speak froward things, continually endeavouring to spread infidelity, impiety, and licentiousness, especially among the rising generation,—who have abandoned the paths of uprightness, that they may walk without restraint in the ways of darkness,—who rejoice in the practice of all manner of iniquity; and with adulterous women too, who, like Delilah of old, the bewitching ensnarer

of Samson, by their vile flatteries, are continually attempting to draw the young and unwary into their fatal net. It is truly said here, that the houses of such infamous persons incline unto death, and their paths unto the dead; so that none that go unto them return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life. What can effectually preserve us from these fearful evils? Heavenly wisdom will do it; but it will do it only if it enters into our hearts, and is fixed there by the hand of the Holy Spirit, as a powerful practical principle within us.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we come before thee confessing our unworthiness. O Lord, deal not with us, we beseech thee, according to our deservings, but according to thine own boundless mercy in Christ Jesus. Behold, O God, our shield, and look on the face of thine anointed. For his sake receive us graciously, and love us freely. Though our trespasses be more numerous and more aggravated than we can conceive, yet the blood of thy beloved Son, shed on the cross for the remission of sin, can wash them all away; and we flee to that blood; we entreat thee to wash our polluted souls in that precious fountain which thou hast opened for sin and uncleanness. Though we can bring nothing to thee but nakedness and filthy rags, yet the perfect righteousness of Emmanuel can clothe our nakedness, and make us stand accepted before thee; and we desire to take hold of this unspotted robe, that we may be clothed therein. O Lord, do thou clothe us in it; and do thou also renew us in the spirit of our minds, by the sanctifying grace that is in Christ Jesus, that we may be a holy people unto thee the Lord. O give us faith to look to him alone, to receive him in all the fullness of the blessings which thou hast treasured up in him for the supply of thy people's necessities, and to cleave to him through all the remaining days of our life, as the Lord our righteousness, and peace, and strength, and consolation. Thou knowest how blind we are; O send forth thy saving light and truth into our hearts to lead and guide us. O impart to us thy Holy Spirit to open our eyes, that we may behold the wondrous things which are contained in thy law. Let it ever be our chief desire to know thee as thou art in Christ, to know thy beloved Son, as the only Saviour of a perishing world, and to know, and love, and obey all thy revealed will. Let us never be weary of searching thy blessed word; make its inestimable truths plain to us; above all, render them sweet to our taste, even sweeter than honey from the honey-comb, and more precious than thousands of gold and silver. Let them be a light to our feet, and a

lamp to our path. We look to thee for strength and guidance this day. O Lord, it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps; lead thou us, then, in the way in which we ought to go; keep us from the paths in which destroyers walk; and let all the trials which we have to encounter this day tend, through thy blessing, to prepare us for thy blessed rest above; and all we ask is for the great Redeemer's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 17—20.

SCRIPTURE—1 COR. II.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—5. What a noble pattern of a Christian minister was the apostle Paul! With what simplicity of mind and unwearied diligence did he labour in his Master's cause! He had ever but one end in view, which was, the declaring unto men the testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ and him crucified: and this testimony he delivered to the Corinthians, and every where else, without the smallest parade of human oratory or human learning. Christ was the centre and the sun of his preaching; and knowing that this was God's appointed method for the salvation of men, he was fully assured, that wherever it was set forth, even in the most unadorned manner, it would be blessed for the conversion of as many as had been ordained to eternal life. He was most solicitous that the faith of the Corinthians should stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God; and it was this feeling which often oppressed him with fear and trembling, lest his infirmity should hinder his success, or in any way thwart the glorious doctrines which he promulgated. It is impossible, but that the ministrations of such a devoted servant of Christ should be eminently successful. He tells us they were so; for his speech was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Ver. 6—9. Let us mark the import of the wisdom of which the apostle here speaks. It is no other than the gospel of the grace of God, which, as a grand scheme of divine contrivance, signally displays the manifold wisdom of God, and is suited, designed, and blessed for making men wise unto salvation, through faith in a crucified Saviour. This wisdom is very different from the wisdom of the men of this world, whose various devices for propitiating the favour of God, and making corrupt man better, are trifling and vain, and will perish with themselves. It is the wisdom of God in a mystery, being too deep and unsearchable to be fully comprehended by any created being, and too spiritual and holy to be duly understood and received by men of carnal minds. The Mosaic dispensation only conveyed some obscure intimations of it. It was hidden under Jewish types and shadows. In a word, it was ordained and intended by God, before the world began, as the scheme by which he should conduct his chosen people to the enjoyment

of salvation here, and of eternal glory hereafter. Proud, self-righteous men may despise this mystery as foolishness; yet all who are perfect, that is, all who are savingly enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and have attained to some considerable measure of knowledge and grace, through their acquaintance with it, regard it as the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; and as providing blessings for all who cordially embrace it, which far surpass any thing that has been seen, or heard, or imagined by men. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' Ver. 10—13. Even the apostles themselves did not discover the mystery of divine wisdom in the redemption of sinners by the incarnation, righteousness, atoning sacrifice, and mediation of God's coequal Son, by their own sagacity; but God revealed it to them by his Spirit; for that divine agent alone knoweth the deep things of God, and therefore none but he can discover them savingly and effectually to the soul of the sinner; just as no man knoweth and can reveal the thoughts and secret purposes of a man's heart, save the spirit of man which is in him. What need have we all to remember this vital truth of the gospel! Let it, then, be our daily fervent prayer, that the Lord would pour down the Holy Ghost upon us, to lead us into all the truth, and to make us savingly acquainted with that mystery of godliness which he has devised for our salvation. Ver. 14—16. How humbling, yet how true are these words, 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' Though the spiritual things which the Holy Ghost reveals in the scripture, be placed in the clearest light before the minds of unregenerate men, yet they do not embrace and approve of them, because through the darkness, pride, and depravity of their carnal hearts, they account them uninteresting, unnecessary, inconsistent, or absurd; yea, they are under a moral incapacity of understanding them in a truly spiritual and practical manner, because sin has deprived them of the power of spiritual discernment, and of all spiritual relish. It is widely different with those, however, who have been renewed in the spirit of their minds. Having been led into an acquaintance with divine things by the Holy Spirit, they are capable of forming a right judgment concerning all that relates to God's way of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ, they can distinguish truth from error in every thing connected with that all-important matter; they discern a heavenly glory in all its parts; and they feel their transforming power within them.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we adore and praise thee as the great parent of mercies. We bless thee for life, and health, and every temporal comfort we possess. Above all, we thank thee for the inestimable religious privileges which we enjoy in the happy land wherein we dwell. Thou hast sent the glad tidings of thy great salvation to this

distant island of the sea; and many of its inhabitants hast thou drawn to thyself through faith in the blood of thy beloved Son. Thou hast opened wells of salvation in the midst of us, to which thou art daily inviting us to repair, that we may drink, and be refreshed by their healing waters. O Lord, let us not, like too many, despise thy rich mercy. Let us not account thy gracious plan of saving sinners foolishness, because it tends to humble our proud carnal hearts, and requires that we should render to thee all the glory of our salvation. Let us be ever so much abased, but be thou and thy great name exalted. To us belong shame and confusion of face, but to thee be everlasting honour and glory ascribed. O Lord, help us to embrace the Son of thy love, as he is freely offered to us. Make him our prophet, priest, and king. Reveal him to our hearts by thy Holy Spirit, that we may know the things which are freely given us of thee. O Lord, thou hast promised the gift of thy Holy Spirit. O Lord, we now plead thine own promise; deny us not this gift, and that we may be brought into a holy resemblance to him. O Lord, we would be satisfied with nothing short of a full share of all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, and a real union with Christ. Enable us to live by faith upon the Son of God; and growing daily in all holiness, and humility, and meekness, and heavenly-mindedness, to become more and more conformed to his blessed image, and more and more fit for dwelling with him where he is. Deliver us from every remnant of indwelling sin, and fill us with love to that Saviour who loved us and died for us. O Lord, let the savour of his name be diffused abroad through the whole earth. Let his great salvation be speedily proclaimed in every land, that people of every nation, and tongue, and colour, may praise thy name. May thy Holy Spirit abundantly bless the means that are now used for evangelizing our benighted and guilty race, and let all men soon be brought to feel his illuminating, and converting, and sanctifying power. O Lord, we desire to thank thee, for all the kindness, and care, and protection which thou hast caused us to experience this day, and we would now commit ourselves to thy fatherly keeping for this night. If it be thy will, let our rest be refreshing, that we may be strengthened for the duties and trials of a new day. Hear us, O Lord, and accept of us, and answer us for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXI. 7.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS III.

REMARKS.

Christ is emphatically called the wisdom of God, because he came to destroy 'the wisdom of the wise, and to bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent, by bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel. It is immaterial whether in this chapter we suppose 'wisdom' to personify Christ, or the gospel he reveals. For just as the sun is seen by the bright beams he throws around us, so is Christ revealed to us in that religion of which he is the author.

Wisdom affectionately addresses us as a tender parent, solicitous about the dearest interests of his children. 'My son, forget not my law, but let thine heart keep my commandments.' The soul which is filled with love to God, and under the influence of his Spirit, will yield a cheerful obedience to the divine law; for once the spirit of adoption is imparted, God's commandments are no longer felt to be 'grievous,' they are become the joy, rejoicing, and strength of the new-born child of grace. In the spirit of filial affection he prays, 'O let me not wander from thy commandments,' for 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man;' 'on God's law will I meditate day and night.' His heart, once the dwelling-place of all iniquity—the seat of enmity and rebellion to God and to his law, is now become the treasury of the commandments of his God. Here he hides them and keeps them in safe custody. He suffers not the fowls of the air to pick away the precious seed, nor the wild beasts of the desert to trample it under foot, nor enemies to choke it with tares, nor the 'little foxes' to pluck its tender fruit. 'The word of God dwells in him richly in all wisdom.' On it he fixes the steadfast eye of faith, and adopts it as the rule of his life. He binds it about his neck as his highest ornament and boast, the conspicuous badge, and undoubted evidence of his fidelity and love to God, and thence he receives grace in every time of need. In all his ways the humble and devout man acknowledges God, asking directions of his heavenly Father in every undertaking. While the worldly unrenewed man never doubts his own prudence and ability, flattering himself he has foresight and penetration enough to discover the right path, as well as resolution to pursue it, the man possessed of heavenly wisdom leans not on his own understanding, but trusts in the Lord. He has been taught from experience, from scripture, and from the Holy Spirit, that 'it is not in man to direct his own steps' aright, and that he has neither a sufficiency of wisdom, nor of righteousness, nor of strength in himself. In arranging his plans, in forming connections, in choosing associates, in regulating his pursuits, he prays that God would direct him aright, and would either thwart or prosper his measures, as they might prove favourable or unfavourable to his best interests. In all things he cultivates a sense of his dependence on his heavenly Father.

'Happy, truly, is the man that findeth wisdom,

and the man that getteth understanding; happy here, and happy hereafter. In this world, he possesses the favour and friendship of God and good men. With a conscience void of offence towards God and man, he can enjoy, without abusing, all the comforts of life, and regard them as tokens of a Father's love. Even affliction, the effects of sin, is deprived of its sting, when known to proceed from the hand of a wise and tender Father, affording an evidence of God's love, and of the believer's sonship. In short, he is not only led by a right and secure way to the 'city of habitation,' but the ways thither are ways of pleasantness and paths of peace. But what will be his blessedness in heaven? No heart can conceive! There his joy will be full. He will be put in possession of treasures more precious than rubies, more durable than the purest gold, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. There 'Christ is made of God to him wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.' 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art God, and there is none to be compared unto thee—infinite in wisdom, in knowledge, and in truth. Thou art worthy to be praised, and to be had in reverence of all that draw nigh to thee. Wherewithal shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the most high God? We, who are sinful dust and ashes, are undeserving of the very least of that mercy which we are daily experiencing from thee, our heavenly Father. We have renounced thy parental authority—rejected paternal counsel—forsaken our Father's home—and broken thy holy law,—and by our wilful and unnatural rebellion rendered ourselves obnoxious to thy wrath and curse. Deeming ourselves wiser than thee, we sought our happiness and peace in the ways of sin, and folly, and shame, and are plunged into a state of sin and misery, from which we are both unable and unwilling to deliver ourselves. We have loved idols, and after them would we go. Justly, O Lord, mightest thou have left us to reap the bitter fruits of what we have sowed to ourselves, and said to us in thy hot indignation, He hath loved idols, let him alone. Behold thou art wroth, for we have sinned without cause, and deserve to die without mercy. But thou art God and not man; therefore it is that we are not consumed. Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou the potter. Be not wroth very sore, neither remember iniquity for ever. Return, O Lord, deliver our souls, and save us for thy mercies' sake. See God, our shield from merited wrath, look upon us in the face of thine anointed. Let thy mercy and truth in Christ Jesus be engraven on the table of our hearts, and make our souls the faith-

ful depositories of thy holy law. Enable us to renounce ourselves, and to trust in the Lord with our hearts, and not to lean to our own darkened understandings. When we lack wisdom, may we ask it of thee, who teacheth savingly and to profit. When thine arm is uplifted to chasten us with the rod of affliction, may we learn to kiss the rod, and bow in submission to those sovereign appointments, which while they trouble us, and cause us to tremble, yet make our heart soft, and work in us the blessed fruits of righteousness. If thou anointest our head with oil, and causest our cup of blessing to overflow, may our souls overflow with gratitude, and our hearts with love, to thee, the bountiful Giver of all good. As we have freely received, may we freely give. Enable us to devise liberal things, doing good when it is in the power of our hand to do it; honouring the Lord with our substance; and in all things endeavouring to do to others, as we, in like circumstances, would have them do unto us. Dwell, O God, in our hearts, and dwell in our habitation. May our earthly dwelling-place be the habitation of the just, on which thy blessing rests. Then will goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life, and we shall dwell at length in thine house for ever. Hear, Lord, our prayers, and grant us an answer of peace for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CVI. P.

SCRIPTURE—I COR. III.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The Corinthians had been blest with the labours of several faithful ministers of Christ, especially of Paul, who had planted the gospel among them, and of Apollos who had watered the seed which had been sown. After their departure, other teachers had arisen, who, pursuing their own ambitious views, beguiled the unstable Corinthians, puffed them up by flattery, filled them with a conceit of their own attainments, undermined the peace of the church, and made the cross of Christ of none effect. Pride begat jealousies, strifes, and divisions, and finally led to lamentable errors in doctrine, and gross irregularities in practice. Their high spiritual privileges, instead of being improved for their advancement in the divine life, proved the occasion of discord and animosity. They became divided into various parties, of which they constituted their favourite ministers the separate heads, and by their eager contentions for the glory of their leaders—over-estimating one, and depreciating their opponents, they entirely lost sight of the grand essentials of genuine godliness. To re-

press these unchristian rivalries, the apostle remonstrates with his converts on the sinfulness of a conduct so injurious to themselves, and to the holy religion they professed. He points out the source, the inconsistency, the evil effects now, and the bitter consequences hereafter, of the conduct he deprecates; and then directs them to the only means by which these evils may be remedied, and their consequences prevented.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

If believers would desire to make attainments in scriptural knowledge, it must be pursued in the way of holiness and of faith. For the man who has made the highest attainments in spirituality of mind, will also be the best instructed in the deep things of God. 'Mere knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth.' If any man love God, the same is known of him; and the secret of the Lord is with such as fear him, and he will show them his covenant. Whatever tends to carnalize the mind, or withdraw the heart and affections from God, ought to be carefully avoided, even though in itself lawful, as the soul is thereby exposed to the wiles of satan, the evidence of a personal interest in Jesus is apt to be overshadowed; and that progress in the knowledge of God is retarded which might qualify the believer for higher degrees of perfection and happiness in heaven.

Satan often appears as an angel of light, especially to God's children, because in this form he can assail them unsuspected. In this character he tries to avert their faith and dependence from Christ, and to substitute in his stead *ministers*, who are but earthen vessels, or *ordinances*, which are only channels of grace, and satan cares not to what object their love and hope is transferred, provided he can deprive them of the true source of all their strength, an humble trust in God. How many has he thus deluded with a name to live, while they have in reality forsaken Christ, the true and only foundation of a sinner's hope; and on a mere profession of faith in his name, erected an edifice of a fair self-righteous morality, which will present as feeble a resistance to the storm of divine wrath, as wood, hay, or stubble to the devouring flame! 'Let no man deceive himself,' 'God is not mocked;' what profit is there in self-deception, if sinners cannot succeed in deceiving God. Better far to 'awake to righteousness, and no longer sin against themselves and God.' If our hearts be the temple of God, let us permit them to become the residence of the Holy Spirit. Let nothing unholy or that defileth be permitted to enter, but let the incense of praise, and the pure offering of a contrite spirit, be daily presented to Jehovah from the altar of the heart. But if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, whatever he may profess, that man is none of his. But whosoever possesses the meek and lowly Spirit of Jesus, is enriched with all the fullness of God. The wisdom of God instructs his ignorance; the strength of God is perfected in his weakness; the honour of God is the theme of his glorying; the unsearchable riches of Christ his unfailing treasury. In short, 'all things are his; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or

things to come, all are his; and he is Christ's, and Christ is God's.'

PRAYER.

Almighty God, before whom angels veil their faces with their wings, and seraphs bend in lowly adoration, bow down thine ear to the thanksgivings and supplications of thy guilty children, who would approach thee through Jesus Christ. Consume us not in the fire of thy holy indignation, but regard us with that favour and love which thou bearest to thine own. We thank thee, that we have an advocate with thee, even Jesus Christ, the righteous one, who has a fellow-feeling with all our infirmities, who knows the frailties of our frame, who sympathises in all our afflictions, whose plea is all-powerful, and whose advocacy is all-prevalent. Through him we approach with boldness to thy throne of grace to seek and obtain mercy; and to find grace to help us in our time of need. We would desire to place all our dependence, and build all our hope of salvation on the stone, the tried stone, the precious corner-stone, the sure foundation, which, in mercy and love, thou hast laid in Zion for thy believing people; for other foundation can no man lay, but that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. To whom thou, O God, hast entrusted the mighty work of our salvation, may we by faith intrust with the keeping of our souls. On whom thou hast laid the iniquities of us all, may we lay the burden of our sins, and our sorrows, and take his yoke which is easy, and his burden which is light. Through him may we find access by the Spirit unto thee, the Father, bound to thee, and to our Christian brethren, by him who is the corner-stone of the church of God; and on this pearl of great price, may we be enabled to rear an edifice adorned by the fruits of the Spirit, and reflecting the beauties of holiness. Permit us not to fall into the soul-ruinous sin of deceiving ourselves with a mere name to live, while we are in reality spiritually dead. Let us not make a Saviour of mere instruments and outward ordinances; but looking by faith, through the means of the God of all grace, may we value the earthen vessels as the blessed channels of communicating to our souls the pure waters of life which flow from the throne of God. May we obey them that are our spiritual overseers, and submit ourselves; for they watch for our souls, as they that must give account. Make our hearts, O God, the honoured temples of the Holy Ghost, that, by his indwelling and sanctifying power, we may become more and more qualified for dwelling for ever with the Lord, in the glorified and heavenly temple of the Zion

above. Enrich our souls with the treasures of grace; give us to be spiritually minded, which is life and peace. Make us heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus; this is all our salvation, and all our desire. And to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be ascribed all glory and praise, now, and for ever. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 12.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS IV.

REMARKS.

Solomon was fully alive to the importance and good effects of a religious education. He had himself possessed the advantage of being trained under the watchful eye of a pious father, who had taught him the commandments of God from his childhood. He esteemed these early lessons of wisdom as his greatest blessings, and desired to transmit them to his own children, and to future generations, as his most valuable legacy.

As life is the seed-time for eternity, so is childhood and youth the seed-time for riper years. According to the seed then sown will be the future fruit. 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' What duty can be more consonant with reason and scripture than that of the religious instruction of the young by their parents, their natural guardians? When professing Christian parents can trample under foot the most solemn vows—exhibit an utter destitution of Christian, if not of natural, affection, towards their offspring—set before them no holy example—instil into their youthful minds no sound religious principles—and disregard their spiritual interests, how can it be otherwise than that the rising generation should spring up a seed of evil doers—children that are corrupters—that they should prove forsakers of God, disobedient to parents, covenant-breakers, unruly? Each successive generation, copying the evil example of that which preceded, becomes in this manner more deeply depraved, departs farther from God, and at last, when their measure of iniquity is full, God is provoked to pour out his fury on the families and nation that call not on his name.

How awfully mistaken are those who act as if they thought true religion beneficial only for a dying man, a good preparative for such a change, but as rather detrimental than otherwise to a man's temporal prosperity! Even Christian parents entertain some false notion of this kind, as if to train up their offspring for heaven were to unfit them for the occupations and duties of life. Solomon's views of the effects of religion in this life are very different, ver. 7—14. The fear of God he had found to be the best safeguard against the indulgence of selfishness, covetousness, malice, wrath, envy, deceit, as well as against those grosser vices which entail shame and misery in this life on those who practise them. 'The curse

of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the righteous.'

But whatever lessons of moral instruction may be taught, and however diligently they may be inculcated, they will, for all spiritual good, prove vain, unless they be not only engraven on the memory, but impressed on the heart, by the stamp of the divine Spirit. Solomon was taught, by experience and observation, that the heart was the root of all evil, as well as the seat of holy principles of heavenly planting. 'Out of the heart proceed all evil thoughts;' and also out of the heart are the issues or springs of spiritual life. If the life would be reformed, it is necessary, first, that the heart be renewed, for according to the state of the heart will be the life. Purify this fountain, and all its streams, its thoughts, words, and actions, will be pure. Well, then, does Wisdom teach us, 'keep thy heart with all diligence.' It is of vital importance to the interests of the immortal soul, that a habit of ruling and governing the thoughts and dispositions of the heart be early acquired and diligently practised, that its evil propensities may be nipped in the bud before they attain maturity.

PRAYER.

Father of mercies and God of all grace, we would desire to kneel before thee, our Maker, and to offer thee up our humble tribute of gratitude and praise. Thou hast guarded us from all outward evil, watched over us with parental tenderness during the obscurity of night, and brought us in safety to the blessings of another day. We have laid us down and slept, for thou, Lord, hast caused us to dwell in safety. To thee we are indebted for all the temporal and spiritual blessings we enjoy. It is of thine infinite goodness that we have been born in a land where the sound of the gospel may be heard, and its privileges freely enjoyed. It is to thee we owe the advantages of a scriptural and godly education, whereby we have been taught to know our Creator in the days of our youth, and instructed in the way of everlasting life. Thou hast given us line upon line, and precept upon precept; and in the enjoyment of sabbath blessings and gospel ordinances, thou hast hedged in our path, so that we should not err from thy ways. Thou hast led us about, and instructed us, and kept us as the apple of thine eye. Well mightest thou say regarding us, What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done to it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes. Notwithstanding all thy tender solicitude and long-suffering forbearance, how unfruitful have we proved ourselves to be! Have we not refused to listen to the voice of heavenly wisdom? How have we hated instruction, and despised reproof, and disobeyed the voice of our teachers! How have we gone in the path of the

wicked, and followed the multitude to do evil! and breaking through all thy hedges, and bursting all the barriers of conscience, and scripture, and godly friends, and providential warnings, that opposed us in the indulgence of our ungodly inclinations, have we not drunk in iniquity as the ox drinketh up water? Our sins are highly aggravated, in that they have been committed against knowledge, light, truth, warnings, and all the means of grace, leaving us, O God, without an excuse to plead for our multiplied transgressions. Against thee, thee only have we sinned; for we acknowledge our transgressions; our sins are ever before us. We lothe ourselves in our own sight for our iniquities and abominations. Wash, then, us thoroughly from all our iniquity, and cleanse us from our sin; for though they be as scarlet, thou canst make them whiter than the snow; though they be red like crimson, thou canst make them pure as wool. Create within us clean hearts; renew a right spirit within us. O that the blood of Christ might be savingly applied by thy Spirit to purify the bitter fountain of the heart, to purge our consciences, renew our wills, and sanctify our natures, that their issues might be life for ever. Give us grace to exercise a godly jealousy over our thoughts, feelings, and words, that we may cease to do evil and learn to do well. Establish all our goings in the ways of holiness and eternal life, that we may be seduced by no temptations to turn aside either to the right hand or to the left. And may our path be yet that of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. All our supplications we present in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—I CORINTHIANS IV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The causes which led to the lamentable declension of the church of Corinth have been already adverted to. The task of removing them was both painful and delicate to the tender-hearted and humble apostle of the Gentiles. Painful, that it should have been requisite for him, who 'travailed in birth until Christ should be formed in them,' to administer reproof to his children in the faith; and delicate, lest, by provoking their enmity to himself and to the truth, he should sacrifice altogether the hope of advancing their farther good, and defeat the very ends he sought most earnestly to promote. Under the influence of such feelings and views most men would have deemed it prudent to refrain from giving offence,

under the plea that their future usefulness might be impeded. But the apostle Paul did not 'confer with flesh and blood,' but acted in the manner which he was persuaded fidelity to Christ, and love to the souls of the backsliding Corinthians, imperatively demanded.

Before animadverting directly on their heinous offences, he reluctantly enters into a vindication of his own character, in order to remove the injurious suspicions they entertained respecting the motives of his ministerial conduct. Necessity was laid upon him, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, to reprove, rebuke, correct, with all authority, as their conduct required, uninfluenced either by their praise or censure. Their censure he disregarded, for God was his Judge; their praise he sought not, for though he magnified his office, he did not exalt himself; so far otherwise, he wished both himself and them never to forget, that he and his friend Apollos, as well as all other ministers of Christ, had nothing to glory of. They were but instruments in God's hands—servants, stewards, ambassadors of Christ, whose commission they bore, and whose embassy they were bound faithfully to discharge. The worldly circumstances of the Corinthians was one of ease and comfort, honour and affluence; while his was, like his Master's, one of painful destitution and disinterested sufferings, rewarded by cold ingratitude and bitter persecution. By what motives, then, could he be actuated, but those of faithfulness to Christ, and love to the souls of men?

Well might the Corinthians be ashamed of their base ingratitude to him who thus toiled and suffered solely for their good. With singular tenderness of soul, and beautiful simplicity of language, the apostle, in verses fourteen and fifteen, hastens to overcome evil with good. His sole vengeance is love; all the retaliation he seeks is their salvation. A father's bowels yearn over them; and he expostulates with them as his beloved children, whom he would far rather reclaim to the ways of Christ, and to the paths of righteousness, by gentleness and affection, than by the painful rod of severity and rebuke.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The design of God, in all his works, is to advance and secure the glory of his own name. This great design should never be lost sight of, either by ministers, by congregations, or by individual Christians, and ought also to be carefully distinguished from the means and instruments employed to advance it. All other ends must be regarded as subordinate and inferior, and, if incompatible with this, must be renounced as unworthy and unsafe. Nothing can so dignify and exalt the creature, nothing can elevate its character and secure its happiness so effectually, as to deny selfish ends, and be devoted to God's glory. That soul enjoys the closest walk with God, which, in self-denying dependence on the Spirit of Christ, aims most simply at God's glory. This is the spring of all true and unreserved obedience. Whenever this high principle of the Christian character ceases to operate, the believer relapses into pride and vanity. Self becomes the object of his idolatrous pursuit; and he seeks the glory of others,

with the view thereby of promoting his own, and indulges a censorious and uncharitable spirit towards those whose views suit not his selfish and unholy ends. The conduct of Paul and of the Corinthians strikingly exemplify those very opposite characters. Aiming at God's glory in the salvation of souls, and denying himself, the former stands a bright pattern for the imitation of all who serve Christ, and especially of those who are put in trust with the ministry of the gospel. The latter stands a beacon on the fatal rock of self-righteous pride, lest believers should make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience.

PRAYER

O Lord, who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? We would give thanks at the remembrance of thy holiness and justice, thy mercy and grace, as unfolded in the work of our redemption. In thy cross, O blessed Jesus, we see mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace embracing each other, the glory of God exalted, and the rebellious sinner saved. Our souls, O Lord, would bless thee, and all that is within us would be stirred up to bless and magnify thy holy name, for thou forgivest all our iniquities; thou healest all our diseases; thou redeemest our lives from destruction; thou crownest us with loving-kindness and tender mercies. We have nothing that is good but what we have received from thy gracious hand; yet with thine own would we serve and glorify thee. We would not regard ourselves as our own property; we are thine, thou hast bought us with an infinite price, and we would desire to manifest our love to thee by glorifying thee in our bodies and spirits which are thine. Assist us, O Lord, in rendering to thee the true service of an undivided heart, for with such sacrifice thou art well pleased. Yet, alas! our consciences testify against us, that, during the past day, thy glory has not been our single or chief aim in all we have done. We have been endeavouring to serve God and mammon; or, alas! serving the world and ourselves to the utter exclusion of God from all our thoughts. And if our hearts condemn us, thou, who art greater than our hearts, and knowest all things, must condemn us also. We humbly confess, and with sorrow lament, how much we are influenced by the fear of the world's censure, or the love of the world's praise, by selfishness, and the love of carnal ease and security, and are thereby deterred from making any sacrifices of personal feeling or comfort for thy cause and glory. Pardon, O gracious God, our ingratitude, unbelief, and coldness of heart. Strengthen our faith, and augment our love to him who loved us, and gave himself a sacrifice for our

sins, that we may be constrained to live no longer to ourselves, but to him who died for us and rose again. Grant us holy boldness and confidence through the faith of Jesus, that we may count it all joy to bear our Lord's reproach, and rejoice if we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. We would desire to glory in nothing but in the cross of Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world. Forgive us all our sins, and hear, answer, and accept of our prayers and praises, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXI. 7.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS VIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

There can be little doubt that Christ is the person by whom we are here addressed. Whether or not the inspired penman was fully aware of the real scope and bearing of the language which the Holy Ghost put into his mouth, is a question not so easily determined; but to us who have the New Testament writings as a key to explain the mysteries of the Old, it can hardly admit of a doubt, that he who was known to the ancient saints as 'Wisdom,' the impersonation of wisdom, intelligence, and truth, was none other than the second person in the Godhead, the eternal 'Word,' 'the Truth,' 'the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.' Indeed there are many things in this chapter which it is impossible to apply to wisdom considered simply as an attribute of the divine nature; whilst there is no part of it that does not admit of an easy and obvious explanation, when we view it as the language of uncreated intelligence and Wisdom, addressed to the ignorant and guilty 'sons of men.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

It is grievous to think of the backwardness which there is in the human heart to receive the lessons of divine truth. Every other kind of instruction, even 'the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge,' is willingly listened to and greedily devoured; but for the words of eternal life, the intimation of God's love toward a fallen world, sinners have no relish and no appetite. Upon this subject, of all others, 'their ears are dull of hearing.' They speak of religion as a difficult and abstruse subject, and talk of the impossibility of arriving at any certain conclusion, when the most pious and learned men have differed so widely. This, however, is but a mere subterfuge. What is the real state of the case? In every question of duty, and in every thing that concerns the way of a sinner's salvation, the language of God's word is plain, intelligible, and emphatic. 'Doth not Wisdom cry, and understanding put forth her voice?' Does not the proclamation of God's mercy to sinners, and the free invitation to all to come unto the Saviour, stand forth broadly and legibly on every page of the inspired

word? And how precious are the words of Christ, to which sinners are thus turning a deaf ear! They are 'better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to them.' They speak to us of a reconciled Father, who, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life, gave up to the death his only begotten Son, that Son who 'was by him as one brought up with him, and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;' and who, in compliance with the will of his Father, came and tabernacled with men upon the earth, because 'his delights were with the sons of men.' Let us, then, reverently hearken to the counsels of infinite 'Wisdom,' even of Christ, when he counsels us to buy of him 'gold tried in the fire, that we may be rich, and white raiment, that we may be clothed, and eye-salve, that we may see.' And let us never forget, that 'whoso findeth Him, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, our heavenly Father, we desire this morning to bow ourselves down in humble reverence at the footstool of thy throne. We would remember that thou art in heaven, and we upon the earth; that thou art our Creator, and we the work of thy hands; that thou art from everlasting to everlasting, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and that we are of yesterday and know nothing. O Lord, make us duly sensible of our own ignorance and foolishness. Make us to see how far we have gone astray from the paths of true wisdom in forsaking God, the only permanent and satisfying portion of an immortal soul, and seeking for happiness in the empty and perishing joys of a vain world. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but we have neither known nor considered the hand that feeds us, and that is daily loading us with benefits. We acknowledge, O God, the guilt, as well as the foolishness, of our ways. With shame and confusion of face would we confess the sin with which we have been chargeable, in preferring the creature to the Creator, and postponing the claims of God to the calls of our own wicked and corrupt inclinations. O Lord, pardon our iniquity, for it is very great. Deal with us not in thy wrath; vex us not in thy hot displeasure. Leave us not to reap the consequences of our own pursuits, or to be filled with the fruits of our own devices; but save us with an everlasting salvation, and magnify thy power and grace in the midst of our abounding iniquity. O make us all monuments of thy redeeming mercy, and glorify thy great name in rescuing us from the bondage of corruption, and bringing us into the glorious liberty of thy children. We thank thee for the promise of the Holy Spirit. O may his influences be richly *shed abroad in our hearts*, purifying our affec-

tions, renewing our wills, and transforming us wholly into the divine image. May he implant and cherish within us every holy disposition, confirm every right resolution, and strengthen us for the discharge of every duty. We desire to feel more and more our absolute dependence on thy promised grace. Lord, we are weak and insufficient; we have no strength in ourselves. We are ever ready to be drawn away into the communion of sin by the snares and temptations of a world that lieth in wickedness; and if left to ourselves, we must infallibly make shipwreck of our faith, and come short of eternal life. But our dependence is on thee; our hope is in thy word. Leave us not, O Lord, nor forsake us. Make thy grace sufficient for us, and perfect thy strength in our weakness. We thank thee that we have been preserved throughout the past night, and brought to see the light of another day. Keep us throughout this day from evil. Defend us from every accident and danger. Preserve us especially from sin. In all our intercourse with our fellow-men, may we be enabled to conduct ourselves as the followers of the Lord Jesus. May we set a watch upon our lips, that we offend not with our tongue. May we be enabled to keep our heart with all diligence from the intrusion of every sinful thought. And in the midst of the business and the various pursuits of time, may we be enabled ever to bear upon our minds the grand realities of eternity. Hear us, O Lord, in these our supplications, and graciously accept of us and of our services, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI.

SCRIPTURE—I CORINTHIANS V.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In this chapter the apostle takes notice of a gross scandal that had broken out in the Corinthian church, and gives authoritative directions for purging it away. He commands them, without delay, to cast out that wicked person from their communion, to 'deliver him to satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus,' i. e. to excommunicate him; to regard him no longer as a Christian, but as a subject of satan's kingdom; 'a heathen man and a publican.' And this they were to do, not only for the safety of the Christian body, but out of a regard to the best interests of the offender himself, that in him the 'flesh,' or carnal nature, might be 'destroyed,' and his 'spirit saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.' It seems strange that in these circumstances the Corinthians should be

'puffed up,' and not rather humbled and overwhelmed with grief. But at this time party disputes and jealousies ran high among them. 'One said, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos; and so eager were their feelings of partizanship, and so anxious was each contending faction to uphold the reputation and screen the delinquencies of their favourite leaders, of whom it is probable this incestuous person was one, that they rather gloried and made a boast of his extraordinary gifts, and plumed themselves on their connection with one so eminent as a teacher, than mourned over the flagrant wickedness by which their church had been polluted. 'Your glorying,' says Paul, 'is not good;' meaning that it is eminently the reverse. He then reminds them, that a 'little leaven leaveneth the whole lump;' that wickedness is contagious, and if not speedily checked, would soon spread and contaminate the whole body. That even as the Israelites searched for and put away all leaven out of their houses before partaking of the passover, so it became them for whom 'Christ, their passover, was slain,' to purge out all such wickedness from among them, in order to a comfortable and profitable communion with Christ, and with one another, either at the Lord's table, or in the ordinary exercises of worship. He tells them, moreover, that although it was impossible, without going out of the world altogether, wholly to avoid the society of grossly immoral persons, they should studiously shun the companionship of every man professing to be a 'brother,' who was notoriously addicted to any one of the gross sins which he enumerates.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How feeble is all human virtue without the restraining influence of the grace of God. In the case of the most heinous offender, the believer may behold what he himself might have been, had God only left him to the suggestions of his own corrupt heart. Let us, then, not be high-minded, but fear, and trust not to our own resolutions, but to the strength of promised grace. It is melancholy to think, that, even in this advanced period of the Christian church, we 'must needs go out of the world,' if we would escape the contact of wicked and profligate men. But although we cannot, in the ordinary intercourse of life, avoid mingling with such characters, let us be careful to shun their society as much as possible, seeing that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

PRAYER.

O Lord, to whom can we go but unto thee? thou hast the words of eternal life. Thou only canst pardon our sins and sanctify our natures; canst heal our backslidings, and give grace to help us in every time of need. We would approach thee this evening under a deep sense of our guilt and unworthiness. It is of thy great mercy that we have not, long ere this time, been cut down as cumberers of the ground, and had our portion assigned us with the workers of iniquity, in that place where thou hast forgotten to be gracious. But in the exercise of thy won-

drous forbearance and long-suffering, we are still spared in the land of the living, and in the place of hope. O may it not be to add iniquity unto iniquity, and to multiply provocation against thee, until thy long-suffering be exhausted, and thy Spirit cease to strive with us. May we esteem the time past of our lives more than sufficient to have wrought the will of the flesh, and resolve henceforth to live no longer the rest of our time in the flesh, to the lusts of man, but to the will of God. With deep humility and reverence would we acknowledge the sovereignty of thy grace in all thy dealings with the children of men. We feel that it is not of him that willesh, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. And if we have been saved from falling into those gross transgressions of which others of our fellow-creatures have been guilty, it is not because we are by nature better than they, or because we have done any thing to deserve thy grace, but only through the free and sovereign mercy of God, who alone maketh us to differ. O may we never lose the impression, that our hearts are by nature deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. And may we learn every day to lean less and less on the strength of our own resolutions, and more and more on the strength of promised grace. Grant, O heavenly Father, that we may not only have deeper convictions of the evil of sin, but livelier views of the power, and grace, and sufficiency of the Saviour. May Christ be every day more precious to us; and whilst we rest upon him all our hopes of pardon and acceptance, may our affections flow out towards him in lively gratitude for the great love wherewith he has loved us. O that his name and praise were universally known and proclaimed! Lord, let the time soon come when his kingdom shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Stir up in the hearts of all thy people a more ardent zeal for the glory of Christ, and the extension of his kingdom throughout the world. Bless all ministers and pastors in thy church; may they be wise to win souls unto Christ. And may a special blessing accompany the ministry of the word in our native land. Let thy Spirit descend like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth. O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of us, and grant us times of refreshing from thy presence. Bless, we beseech thee, all with whom we are connected, by whatever tie. Enrich their souls with the communications of thy grace, and make all things to work together for their good. Be merciful to the poor, the sick, the afflicted, and the dying.

Sanctify family affliction to all who are visited with it; and prepare us for every dispensation of thy providence that awaits us in life. Prepare us for living or for dying. Teach us to submit with implicit acquiescence in every arrangement of thy holy will concerning us. And may we feel, that to us to live is Christ, and to die, unspeakable gain. We desire to commit ourselves to thy care and keeping this night. Forgive all the sins of the past day. Give us refreshing rest, and bring us to see the light of another morning in health and strength, to fit us for all our duties. And to thee, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, be glory, and dominion, and praise, world without end. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRaise—PSALM XLI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS XI.

REMARKS.

The various important instructions contained in this chapter may be comprised under three distinct heads, viz. Integrity, Discretion, and Liberality. The wise man presents these different topics under a variety of aspects, contrasting them with their opposites, and pointing out the consequences that respectively result from the practice of virtue and of vice. Let us endeavour, then, to lay to heart the weighty truths suggested by this portion of sacred scripture.

We are enjoined, in the first place, to observe the most rigid integrity and uprightness in all our dealings with our fellow men. 'A false balance is an abomination to the Lord; but a just weight is his delight.' It is lamentable to think of the fraud and deceit that is every day practised by men in their commercial intercourse one with another, each striving to over-reach his neighbour, and get the better of him in a bargain. Many who will not be guilty of literally employing a 'false balance,' will have no scruple to rob another of his substance by means scarcely less discreditable, taking advantage, for instance, of his pecuniary necessities to make him part with his goods below their value; or pretending to depreciate their worth, in order the more easily to get possession of them. 'It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he goeth his way, then he boasteth.' Let us remember, however, that 'riches' so acquired 'profit not in the day of wrath;' that day when God shall weigh every man's actions in the just balance of the sanctuary; and that, even as it respects this present world, honesty is the best policy; for whilst 'the integrity of the upright shall guide them, the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them;' and that not only shall 'the righteous be recompensed on the earth, but also the wicked and the sinner.'

Secondly, We are instructed in this chapter to

exercise prudence and discretion in all our intercourse with our fellow-creatures; to avoid detraction, tale-bearing, and rash and unwarranted suretyship for others.

Thirdly, We are here taught to exercise the grace of liberality. How encouraging is the promise, 'the liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.' Let us never forget that we are but stewards of the wealth which God has given us; and that although we have permission, first of all, to provide for the necessities and comforts of ourselves and families, we are bound to employ all that remains in the way that may most advance the glory of God. Men are never the richer of what they withhold from the cause of God, nor the poorer for what they give away; for 'there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.' Nothing is a greater snare to men than making riches their confidence, and imagining that their happiness will always keep pace with their wealth. Let us remember, that 'he that trusteth to his riches shall fall; but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.' Let us bear in mind, moreover, that our liberality must extend itself to the temporal as well as the spiritual interests of mankind; and that we ought to provide for the hungry the bread that perishes, as well as that which endureth unto everlasting life. No character is more justly detested among men than he who strives to enrich himself at the expense of the sufferings of starving thousands. 'He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him; but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, we bless thee that what holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, has been by them committed to writing, and handed down for our edification and instruction, upon whom the ends of the world have come. Make us thankful for the holy scriptures, and teach us to draw from every part of them that instruction which they are designed and fitted to afford. And whilst we search them diligently, in order that we may know the things that are freely given us of God, even the things that belong to our everlasting peace, may we strive also to imbibe those maxims of practical wisdom with which they furnish us for directing our footsteps amid all the duties, and difficulties, and perplexities of life. In every part of our conduct may we be regulated by that wisdom which cometh from above. As the disciples of the Lord Jesus, may we strive to adorn his doctrine in all things; and by the uprightness, and consistency, and circumspection of our lives, endeavour to convince the world around us, that it is a doctrine according to godliness. Enable us to exemplify, in all our dealings, that honesty and integrity of conduct, which would rather suffer injury than inflict it; that charity which

inketh no evil, and taketh not up an ill report against its neighbour; that Christian prudence, which guides its affairs with discretion, so as to be able to distribute, with liberality, to the necessities of the poor and destitute. May we ever bear in mind, that we have nothing in this world which we can call our own; that all that we have is thine, and to be employed only in the way which will most promote thy glory. May we esteem it, therefore, our privilege, as well as our duty, to honour the Lord with our substance, and prize the bounties of thy providence only as fording us more extended means of advancing thy kingdom and cause in the world. O Lord, we would humble ourselves before thee on account of all our past shortcomings in these respects, and on account of all our other aggravated and multiplied sins. Lord, be merciful unto us, and deal with us not as we have deserved. Wash away all our guilt in the blood of the Lamb. We cast ourselves on thy sovereign and unmerited grace, beseeching thee to justify us freely, and to sanctify us wholly. And may we be enabled henceforth to love thee more sincerely, to serve thee more faithfully, and to render a more suitable return for all the goodness which we have experienced at thy hands. Our heart's desire and prayer for all our brethren of mankind is, that they may be saved, and brought to the knowledge of the truth. Let thy name be known upon the earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Bless especially our native land, and prosper a preached gospel in the midst of us. Pour out abundantly thy Spirit upon all thy servants in the ministry; and be pleased to add daily to thy church of such as shall be saved. Lord, take us into thy keeping this day; fit us for every duty and for every trial which may be awaiting us; and bring us at last into thy heavenly kingdom, where there is fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. And all that we ask is for the sake of Jesus Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXIII.

SCRIPTURE—I CORINTHIANS VI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In the first part of this chapter the apostle reproves the Corinthians for their quarrelsome and litigious disposition generally; and in particular, that in the settlement of their differences they were in the habit of dragging each other before heathen tribunals, instead of submitting to the arbitration of their Chris-

tian brethren. His remarks have no reference to the public administration of justice, which is an ordinance of God, and most important to the well-being of civil society. He refers exclusively to personal disagreements among brethren, the very existence of which reflected upon their Christian character, much more the having recourse to 'unjust' or unbelieving magistrates for redress. Upon such matters even the 'least esteemed' saint in the church was sufficient to decide, not to speak of pastors and other office-bearers, whose time would be much better employed otherwise. He reminds them, that the humblest saint shall, on the great day, be associated with Christ in the general judgment of men and angels; and that they ought, therefore, to consider such as fully adequate to take cognizance of the 'smallest matters.' He then proceeds to administer a solemn warning, suggested, probably, by what he had heard of the immoralities that prevailed in the Corinthian church; and after enumerating a hideous catalogue of crimes, any one of which would effectually exclude them from the kingdom of heaven, encourages them to the exercise of faith and repentance by the intimation, that 'such were some of them' who were now, nevertheless, 'washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of the Lord.' The most crying enormity in the church of Corinth seems to have been the prevalence of sins of uncleanness, against which the apostle, in the concluding part of the chapter, lifts up his voice in a strain of indignant rebuke and earnest exhortation, pointing out at once their offensive character in the sight of God, their ruinous consequences to the soul, and the aggravated guilt incurred by those who could thus dare to desecrate and defile a temple of the Holy Ghost.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Nothing is more unseemly in the professors of the gospel than a quarrelsome and contentious disposition. The followers of the Saviour ought to be distinguished above all others by a spirit of meekness, gentleness, and self-denying kindness, qualities that shone so conspicuously in the character of their divine Master. And where differences do occur (as can hardly fail occasionally to happen, constituted as even the best of men are), it is infinitely preferable to have such disputes settled by the friendly interposition of Christian brethren, than by having recourse to courts of law, and rather to suffer wrong, than bring discredit on our holy faith. And let all who name the name of Christ, be careful to depart from all iniquity. And let us learn, also, from this chapter, the necessity of keeping all our appetites and passions under salutary control. As Christians, we are 'bought with a price,' emphatically a 'price,' a price which no language can express, and no imagination conceive—even the blood of God's own Son; and are, therefore, not our own, but God's, and bound to glorify him in our bodies and our spirits, which are his. O let us abstain, then, from every thing that might defile or damage such a costly purchase, and strive so to purify ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, that we may be indeed 'temples of the Holy Ghost,' and 'habitations of God through the Spirit.'

PRAYER.

O thou that dwellest in the heavens, whose name is Holy, and who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, how shall we, thy guilty and polluted creatures, venture to approach thy footstool, or to lift up our eyes to the place where thine honour dwelleth! O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee; but unto us, shame and confusion of face, because we have rebelled against thee. We have reason to be deeply abased when we come into thy presence, and think of all our past ingratitude, and unbelief, and disobedience. We have forfeited all claim to thy favour, and have no reason whatever to show why sentence against our evil works should not be executed speedily. God be merciful to us sinners. For the sake of thine own dear Son, look upon us in mercy, and not in wrath. Behold, O God, our shield, look upon the face of thine Anointed, and for the sake of him who died the just for the unjust, who bore our sins, in his own body, on the tree, and who has fully satisfied all the claims of a broken law in our room and stead, pardon all our iniquity, justify us freely, and receive us into the number of thy children. O teach us to hate sin with a perfect hatred. May the contemplation of all that the Saviour endured on account of it impress us with such a sense of its enormity, that we may henceforth stand in awe and sin not. May the love of Christ constrain us to shun resolutely that evil and abominable thing which he hates; and may it be our constant aim to mortify every unholy desire, and every inordinate affection, and purify ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. Remembering that we are bought with a price, may it be our ambition to glorify God in our bodies and our spirits, which are his; and, as the living temples of the Spirit, may we seek to be so adorned with all the graces of personal holiness, as that we may be instrumental in showing forth the praises of him who loved us, and gave himself for us. With ourselves, we would beseech thee to be gracious to all our brethren of mankind, and especially to such as are of the household of faith. Lord, bless thy church; save thine inheritance; feed them also, and lift them up for ever. May a spirit of brotherly love be more and more manifested among all the followers of the Lamb; and may the time speedily come, when the disciples of a common Lord shall see eye to eye, when all offence shall be removed, and when there shall be nothing to hurt or to destroy in all God's holy mountain. We desire this evening to lay ourselves down to rest, full of thankfulness to thee for all the good-

ness which thou hast made to pass before us throughout the past week. O thou who never slumberest nor sleepest, watch over us during the silent watches of the night; and if thou art pleased to bring us to see the light of another day—another day of the Son of man—fit us, we beseech thee, for all the duties of thy holy sabbath. May our hearts be prepared for thy worship; and whether engaged in thy service in public or in private, may we find it to be a good thing for us to draw near unto God, and to wait upon him in the ordinances of his appointment. O thou hearer of prayer, hear our evening supplication, blot out all our sins, and answer us graciously, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLV. 17.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM XCIV.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—7. The psalmist, surveying the many evils around him, breaks forth in prayer for divine interposition. His pleadings dwell upon several of the causes that are surest to bring down the correcting judgments of heaven. There was strife and oppression in God's household. The affliction fell heavily upon the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. It was caused by unprincipled men, set loose from government, or themselves powerful, who gave rein to their wicked passions against God and men; who inflicted, without fear, their cruel calamities, commands, and threatenings upon the helpless; who scrupled not even to shed innocent blood; reprobates, who proudly gloried in their misdeeds, aware of their atrocity, but denying that God would either see or avenge them. The Lord, however, had said, 'vengeance belongeth to me.' (Deut. xxxii. 35.) The 'ruler,' whom he had appointed over Israel as his 'minister, a revenger to execute wrath upon them who did evil,' (Rom. xiii. 4.) found himself, as matters then stood, not strong enough to discharge his office. Grieved, therefore, to the heart, by the daily spectacle of iniquity and outrage, David vehemently implores the aid of an Almighty arm. The vengeance of God, he well knew, is not passion, but the calm dictate of unerring wisdom. It is never causeless or partial; never too hasty or too severe. It is justice executed by the hand of mercy; a necessary, though dreadful, rigour. The prayer of the psalmist, therefore, is not the language of rage or hatred, uttering imprecations against his personal enemies; but the cry of sympathy with the distressed, beseeching God, in his righteous providence, to deliver them from the hands of extortioners and murderers. It presents, not the decision of a fallible

man, defining, ere it arrive, the doom of his fellow-sinners; but rather the solemn warning of the Holy Spirit by the mouth of his prophet, that the crimes and impieties of these transgressors were fast approaching the limit at which it would become the sovereign judge no longer to wait for their repentance, but vindicate his own glory in their merited destruction.

Ver. 8—11. Accordingly the psalmist next proceeds to assail those hard hearts and depraved minds with the weapons most likely to subdue and convert them. In a strain of awful remonstrance, he urges them with reasons which they cannot refute, pointed with keen, because just, reproaches. They had said, 'the Lord will not see.' But he who alone imparts to men the entire informations of sense, and reason, and conscience, shall he not, replies the psalmist, himself possess transcendent knowledge? 'The God of Jacob,' they had said again, 'will not regard.' But 'he that chastiseth the heathen,' that rained fire on Sodom where he was not known, and consumed the Canaanites, worshippers of other gods, that all the sinful nations might take warning from their fate, 'shall he not correct' his own peculiar people? They bear his name; they have heard his law; they dwell in his presence, and inherit his blessing. Then holiness is his peculiar praise; their sin holds up his great name to special dishonour and blasphemy. By the very terms of his covenant made with them at mount Sinai, he is not more pledged to prosper the obedient of their number, than to cut off the rebellious. Therefore in proportion to the advantages abused by any, shall be the punishment suffered. It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you. Will ye then persist in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly? Understand ye 'fools' among the wise! Repent, ye 'brutish,' among the holy.

Ver. 12—15. The rest of the psalm is addressed to the establishment and consolation of godly men in their adversities. Whether it were the psalmist himself, or any of those who suffered with him in the like spirit, 'blessed,' he fervently testifies, 'is the man' whom God has taught, by sanctified sharp experience, by the commentary of his chastisements upon his word, to place a genuine confidence in him—a heart's trust, without wavering, without suspicion, without reserve. He shall have peace and assurance in his soul, what tempest soever of injuries or calamities may rage without. And while 'his heart is fixed,' the time will change. God, who never ceased in secret to preserve his people, and restrain his enemies, will, in due season, appear openly in his true relation to both. The troubles of the just, the triumphs of the wicked, shall cease. Confusion and discomfiture shall overtake the transgressors; prosperity and peace shall re-enter the dwellings of the righteous; and all the upright in heart, as they hail the change in its approach, will help forward its progress, and rest on its completion, with heart-felt accordance and delight.

PRAYER.

O Lord, the great King, the all-knowing Judge of the world, we stand in awe of thy

righteousness; with lowly hearts, in the name of Christ, we do homage before thee. Blessed be thy name that thou hast made him, even thy beloved Son, and the Son of man, Head over all things, in all ages, for thy church. Increase our faith in him, and accept of us, the unworthy, for his sake. How many and grievous are our sins! How ungodly our hearts! Surely if thy free mercies prevent not, they will number us with thy foes on the great day of retribution. O pardon us freely through him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree: and shed thy love abroad in our whole heart by the Holy Ghost given to us. How long, O Lord, shall the throne of iniquity within us, have fellowship with thee? Shall the law of sin in our members, be ever prevailing against the law of our mind engraven by thy Spirit? O make thy grace triumphant that we may praise thee. Within and without, thy aids are alike needful to us: along with our infirmity, behold our temptations. Innumerable evils compass us about, make thou a way of escape. Compassionate, O Lord, the cares, perplexities, and sorrows of our lot; when our foot slippeth, let thy mercy uphold us. Known it is to thee, if we suffer wrong at the hands of man. Raise up for us such earthly friends as thou seest meet; but be thyself, Lord, our sure defence; our God, be thou the rock of our refuge. If we have adversaries, and thou reprove them, yet let it be in mercy; forgive, and sanctify, and comfort them too: and whether it be they or we, let the man be blessed whom thou chastenest. So teach us out of thy law, that our hearts may rest inwardly from the days of adversity, even while they continue, and may wait with quiet hope, where thy providence permits, to see the goodness of the Lord anew in the land of the living. How many of thy benefits, O Lord, do we daily enjoy! Thy grace enables us to use as not abusing them: and as we have here no continuing city, the Lord lead us into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ. These blessings at large do thou bestow on all those whom we love and should pray for. So visit thy whole church and people, so restore this guilty, this calamitous world. Every where let the wicked be reprov'd and converted, while thy afflicted servants are delivered and comforted. Every where let every power be abolished that would frame mischief by a law; and in the coming of thy kingdom, let judgment return unto righteousness, that all the upright in heart may sing for joy. Hear, Lord, our prayers, with those of all who love thy name; and to thee, in Christ, be glory, now and ever. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXV. 1—5.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS XCV. XCVI.

REMARKS.

What exercise of religion can be more edifying or delightful, than, with reliance upon the aids of the divine Spirit, to lay open our whole mind and heart to the influence of these noble songs? It is not then so much the psalmist's words that reach our ears, as the power of his inspired and enraptured spirit, that is felt exalting our souls into the presence of God, and the joyful fellowship of his worship. How many hearts, fraught with adoration, praise, and thanksgiving, have thus been borne into the 'holiest place of all,' like vessels, richly laden, wafted into harbour, less by the efforts of the mariners, than by the prosperous force of wind and tide! The greatness and glory of God, as the sole creator and possessor of heaven and earth, are, no doubt, magnificently celebrated in these psalms. Yet the chief subjects of them are the wonders of his providence and grace, as affecting his rational creation. He is proclaimed in plain terms, 'a great King above all gods,' that is, above all the principalities of heaven, and all the potentates of this world: not forgetting his absolute control over evil angels that usurp, as gods, the homage of mankind. The nations and multitudes of men, moreover, whose states of commotion or rest are here typified by the sea and the dry land; governments which are the hills, and their princes the trees of the forest; are all declared to be the subjects of God's throne; and are exhorted to praise, honour, and obey him, with a fervour which foresees that, one day, they will hear the call. The main address of the psalmist, however, is made to that people who say of the Lord, 'he is our God,' 'the rock of our salvation,' and 'we are the people of his pasture, and the flock of his hand.'

These are warned against unbelief and disobedience, from the fate of ancient Israel, in not being permitted, for their sin and rebellion, to enter the promised land.

The next generation believed, obeyed, and possessed the land. But after God had long rested there in the midst of them; nay, after the gospel had been preached in the world, and believed in by many, giving rest to their souls; still 'there remaineth,' said the apostle Paul, 'there *remaineth* a rest for the people of God,' a rest far beyond all earthly quiet or contentment—a sabbath in the heavens, more especially after the resurrection of the just; in which shall be combined and consummated the joy of God in his six days' work of creation; the joy of Christ in his work of redemption, completed when, as he rose himself from the grave, he shall also have raised his people; and the joy of God's assembled saints, in the glorious issue of their obedience, and in the ceasing of all their toils, temptations, and sorrows: 'for he that hath entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.' Beholding his workmanship in its finished perfection and immortal beauty, God, the creator, Saviour, and sanctifier, will rejoice in his people; and

his people, beholding all things in his light, willing all things in his will, doing all things in his strength, shall share, as created natures can, the divine blessedness itself—shall 'enter into the very joy of their Lord.' Such is *our* inheritance.

To lead us into the possession of it, the guide of Israel in the desert is ours also throughout our earthly pilgrimage. His claims to *their* confidence all extend to us; and he has added many more. Calvary presents greater wonders than the Red sea. The throne of Christ in heaven is brighter, yet more accessible, than his pavilion in Horeb. Thence he sustains our souls with angels' food; refreshes them with water from the river of life. All our spiritual foes he hath overthrown and cast out; and instead of the temple on mount Zion, built by man, and long since desolate, he is preparing for us 'a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' O let us labour then to enter into rest, and exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin!

Without such a spirit of watchfulness and pious fear, never can the church of Christ be qualified, either to celebrate the divine praises with becoming ardour and enlargement in her own worship, or to alarm, convert, and edify an ungodly world.

PRAYER.

O Lord! we lift up our souls to thee, the one living and true God, of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things. Thou rulest among the hosts of heaven; thou biudest in chains the armies of darkness. The earth is thine, and all that dwell therein. Thou art in Christ reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing unto them their trespasses. O pour down thy Spirit like refreshing rain upon thy churches, that thy saints may praise thee with their whole heart, and may publish the glad tidings of great joy among all nations. Quicken us also by his loving presence in our souls, that we may now make joyful mention of thy greatness and glory, of thy wisdom, might and goodness incomprehensible. O Lord! thou art holy, who would not fear thee? As sinners we abase ourselves in the dust at thy feet. But thou takest no pleasure in the death of such; long-suffering art thou, and slow to anger, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. O pardon our trespasses. In Christ Jesus accept of us, and bless us in Christ Jesus. Our trust towards thee is alone in the merits of his obedience unto death, and in the power of his living sovereignty. To the guidance of his truth we surrender our souls: we devote our whole being to the obedience of his most righteous law: we make over the care of all our interests, our earthly life, our eternal welfare, to the wisdom, faithfulness, and mercy of his all-disposing Providence. O preserve us steadfast in our allegiance to him by the grace of

thy good Spirit. Let his wonderful works, the evidences of his saving might, and of his love that passeth knowledge, be continually before us, lest setting our thoughts on vanity, satan prevail, to blind, pervert, and harden, and destroy us. O Lord, how solemn is our state, as placed by thee upon the trial of our faith and patience; while thou sittest over us as a refiner of silver, waiting to collect the treasure, and to put the dross away! Have mercy upon us, O God. Thyself undertake for us. Strengthen us with all might, by thine own Spirit, in the inner man. Daily give us to watch and pray, even as we are daily tempted. Train us daily to sober self-restraint, and to cheerful service; and when the hidden hour of thy decision comes, whether it find us alone, or associated with many, whatever be the nature or duration of our conflict, uphold us then, we pray, with the right hand of thy righteousness; then make us more than conquerors through him that loved us. Thine oath against Israel, They shall not enter into my rest, be then far from our souls; and near be thine oath to Abraham, By myself have I sworn, that in blessing I will bless thee! Living, may it be our constant privilege and our delight to praise thee; and dying, may our portion be with such as die in the Lord, who rest from their labours, and their works do follow them. Hear us, O Lord, for ourselves, and for kindred friends and neighbours; and thus accept and bless us all, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRaise—PSALM XXXIV. 11—16.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS XV.

REMARKS.

In this chapter, as every where else, the wise king refers all things to God as the supreme disposer. The knowledge of the Lord, he tells us, describes the mysteries of hell, as well as the counsels of heaven, and the influences of both upon the hearts and ways of men, with a clear intuition, as if, in every place, he were all eye to behold them, ver. 11, 3. The regards of the Lord, he adds, correspond to the characters of men. The speech, the prayers, the persons of the godly, are objects not merely of his approbation, but of his love, complacency, and delight: while the thoughts and practices, nay, the very devotions of the wicked, are, each of them, an abomination in his eyes, ver. 26, 9, 8. The doings of the Lord are just the exhibition of these regards practically. He sustains the righteous man, forsakes the wicked. He destroys the prosperity that has been reared in haughty contempt of his law,

but surrounds with a sure protection, the helpless that put their trust in his mercy, ver. 29, 25.

Man's wisdom lies in conforming himself to these characters of God, his folly in the contrary. The wise, in humility and fear, look first to him, and aspire after him, as their highest hope, ver. 33, 24. His words, works, and ways, are their diligent study. Those who can aid them in that pursuit of knowledge, are their constant associates. Reproof itself from the hand of God or man, however bitter, is welcome as improving their spiritual understanding: and so with much present advantage to themselves, and joy to kindred and friends, they attain the heavenly life. But fools turn away from God, give their thoughts to earthliness, disregard the chastenings of providence, hate reproof, however seasonable, and even when it is sweetened by the tenderest concern and affection of father or mother, and living so as to miss all true enjoyment themselves, and to fill the heart of every well-wisher with sorrow, are found at last, except they repent, the foes of God, and the guilty destroyers of their own immortal souls, ver. 33, 24, 14, 31, 10, 12, 5, 20, 32.

The good or evil of a man cannot be shut up within his single person. What he has, that he communicates. The wise disperses wisdom, the fool folly, ver. 28, 2, 7. The one, like a medicinal tree, drops balm upon the distempered spirits of men; the other, like some deleterious shrub, taints them with a festering venom. Delighting himself in mischief, because unhappy within, the one, by intemperate speech and wicked conduct, produces anger, strife, and wretchedness in all around him: the other, watching the fit occasions of expressing, by word and deed, the meekness and charity that possess his own heart, is a flowing fountain of love, and peace, and comfort to his neighbours; a rich blessing, and richly blest, ver. 4, 18, 1, 23. Through slothfulness, caprice, and want of concert, the better designs, at least, which bad men some times form, are wont to drag on but heavily, and often miscarry; while, usually, by the united counsels, mutual confidence, and stedfast energy which holy principle inspires, the enterprises of good men, as favoured by God, clear their own way through the most formidable difficulties, to a happy accomplishment, ver. 22, 19, 21.

Spiritual blessings are the surest, as well as the most precious acquirements of true wisdom, yet it leads also to much worldly good. Pleasant sights, and happy tidings—competent wealth, undisturbed in the possession, because acquired by upright means; and in the enjoyment, consecrated by the divine blessing, and sweetened by domestic harmony and love—habitual cheerfulness of mind, endowing even the body with the vigour of health, and the ornament of a pleasant countenance; whatever good is found in these things, and whatever evil in their opposites, is the native product respectively of wisdom and folly. It may indeed appear on the surface of human affairs, that all things happen alike to all. Solomon saw this fact and recorded it. Yet it could not alter his judgment, that 'wisdom excelleth folly, as much as light excelleth darkness;' still less can it subvert the great principle that 'godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life

that now is, and of that which is to come.' This law works deep in the frame of our earthly condition; and however its operation may, at times, be concealed from our view, by the interference of other laws, not less important than itself, still it is never really departed from in the sight of that wisdom which looks all things through, ver. 30, 27, 6, 16, 17, 15, 13.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, all-wise and almighty, who art ever present throughout thy creation, upholding, ordaining all things, and working all things according to the pleasure of thy will; thou art righteous in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works. A God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right art thou. O how shall we, the children of folly and of sin, already under just condemnation, present ourselves before thy searching eyes? From ourselves there is no hope—no hope from any creature. Thy mercy, O Lord, through Christ Jesus, is our only refuge. Our errors, our trespasses, our stains, our deserved miseries, are past reckoning. Now would we be low in thy presence, judging, dooming our own selves; and encouraged alone by thy gracious call to the chief of sinners, and by the warrant of thy express command to all the sons of Adam, we would now place all our trust in him who is freely made unto us of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Blessed be thy name, that in him we see God manifest in the flesh! O strengthen us by thine almighty Spirit, to put off ourselves, and to put on Christ Jesus, that so thy favour, and not thy frown, may be our portion. Delivered from our perversity of mind, and heart, and life, no more, O God! let us be the occasions of distress or of sin to those whom we ought to love; but actuated by the wisdom which cometh from above, which is first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy, let the fruit of righteousness be sown by us in peace, while we make peace. Bestow what is good of this world's prosperity on us and ours, but above all things, let our souls live before thee, and our inheritance be made sure in thy glorious kingdom. O shed down, on thy church, the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, the Spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind; and increase the numbers, unite the counsels, and bless the labours of those who publish salvation, until thou make this land a well watered garden, thy wasted heritage again a fruitful field, and the heathen wilderness a vineyard of the Lord. Hear us, O Lord, hear us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXVIII.

SCRIPTURE—1 COR. VII.

REMARKS.

In this chapter some precepts seem, at first sight, to be delivered merely as the Christian counsel of the apostle, without inspiration, and others as the express law of Christ. But let us attend to circumstances. The Corinthians had, by letter, requested the apostle to set forth the duties of persons of both sexes with respect to marriage, ver. 1. and as the whole members of that church were divided about their teachers, one saying, 'I am of Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,' and another, 'I am of Christ,' i. 12. it is probable that they had inquired particularly what commands the Lord himself had given on the subject during his personal ministry, as well as what additional rules he communicated through the apostle. To a request thus stated, Paul in reply, would naturally use the expressions, 'I command, yet not I, but the Lord,' ver. 12. and, 'to the rest speak I, not the Lord,' without at all intending to suggest that the one class of precepts was less divine than the other; but rather with the distinct assumption, that both alike were the dictates of the Holy Ghost. Again, although he says, ver. 25, 26, 'I give my judgment,' 'I suppose that this is good,' and afterwards, ver. 40, 'I think that I also have the Spirit of the Lord;' it should be remembered that such mild forbearing forms of speech are constantly used by men high in authority, just to take off the appearance of pride or harshness in their treatment of those put under them, and not in the least as implying that they deem their own power doubtful, or that what they 'think,' 'suppose,' 'judge,' is not to be held decisive. Here, the true force of those phrases may be gathered from the context. At the 25th verse, in a matter where he 'had no commandment from the Lord,' Paul 'gives his judgment,' he 'supposes' that a certain course is good. A little before, at the 12th verse, he had said, in the same manner, 'to the rest speak I, not the Lord,' and then follow certain instructions. These two cases are exactly parallel to one another; in each it is Paul who discourses, not the Lord: and, therefore, what he 'judges' and 'supposes' in the one case, is on the same footing precisely with what he 'speaks' in the other. But what he 'speaks,' he also 'ordains in all churches,' ver. 17. therefore his 'judgments,' and 'suppositions,' are 'ordinances' too. Would he so exalt them if they were merely his own opinions? or even if he doubted whether they were taught him by the Spirit or not? That could not consist with the faithfulness to which, in the act of recording them, he lays claim, as a steward of the mysteries of God, ver. 25; ch. iv. 1, 2. All these precepts, therefore, it is clear, are equally from the Lord, and differ only in being given, some with his own lips, and some through the pen of his apostle.

In another view, however, they are of two kinds: 1st. Commands, to be strictly obeyed in all cases. 2d. Permissions, wisely to be used or not used, according to circumstances.

Married persons are 'commanded,' 1. To have each but one consort; 2. To live in conjugal affection and fidelity; and, 3. Not to dissolve the bond of marriage, except, of course, in the case where divorce is allowed by the Lord, (Matt. v. 32.) They are 'permitted,' 4. While dwelling together, to withdraw from each other for a time, if it be by consent, and for holy ends. 5. But if living separately, without lawful divorce, they 'must' continue single, unless they can be reconciled. Though the precept, 'be not unequally yoked to unbelievers,' undoubtedly has application to marriage; yet, 6. Such Christians as have already married heathens, 'are forbidden' to put them away; conversion being possible, and their children, meantime, being admissible into the church. Yet, 7. If the unbeliever will depart, the Christian is 'free;' only, the division 'must not' originate with the Christian. Lastly, The death of either party, dissolves the conjugal relation.

Unmarried persons, whether always such, or widowed, are classed together by the apostle under the same rules. 1. If celibacy, in any, proves a hinderance to the maintenance of Christian purity, it is 'better' for such to marry. 2. But if any, through the grace of God, can preserve both heart and life unstained, it is, generally speaking, 'expedient' for them to remain as they are. At all times, this makes one tie the less to earth; in times of persecution, it exempts from many cares and sorrows. 3. Yet, upon just occasion, the purest are 'free' to marry; and in doing so, 'they sin not,' ver. 28.

Monastic vows, therefore, being the commandment of men, are, in either case, directly contrary to scripture. Where God gives liberty of choice, they plant a prohibition; and where he makes a way of escape from temptation, they cast a snare upon men's souls.

Parents and guardians are bound by the same rules, in reference to the marriage of their children or pupils, as if their own were in question. Consideration and kindness are to be used; nor must they either insist upon marriage, against God's permission to live single; or oppose it, when, by the divine precept, it ought to take place, ver. 36—38.

The gospel does not require the man who embraces it to change his lawful condition or calling, whether in point of outward religious profession, or of the relations and employments of civil life.

PRAYER.

Thy law, O Lord! is perfect, converting the soul; thy testimony, O Lord, is sure, making wise the simple, the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. Blessed be thy name, O God, who condescendest thus to inform the unworthy. What privilege is equal to ours, who receive not only the revelation of thy saving mercy in Christ, and of thy holy, just, and good commandments,

but also the counsels and admonitions of thy fatherly love, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth! O may that gracious instructor unite all thy sayings deeply in our hearts. May he enable us to observe thy law with reverence and godly fear, and apply thy precepts with understanding and prudence to the government of our lives. O Lord, sanctify us in all our relations one to another. Forgive our past wanderings and sins. Remove every obstruction to our spiritual improvement, in the time to come. Have compassion on such as are walking in the way of their own hearts, and make a mock of thy sacred word. Bring near its truths to them in power, rebuking their lusts, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. O let the love of him reign paramount over all our affections. Let the hope of glory, and not of this world's good, be the guiding star of our conduct through life. Our days are as an handbreadth; impress us with the solemnity of our coming change; and strengthen us, far more mightily than ever, to redeem the time. May we do and suffer all thy holy pleasure with confidence and joy, knowing, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. What are we, O Lord, that thou shouldst hear us? Pardon the iniquity of our prayers, and answer them according to the riches of thy heavenly compassion and kindness, for the sake of Christ Jesus, thy Son, our Saviour. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 129.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS XVI.

REMARKS.

This chapter contains much important instruction, the leading points of which may be thus particularized: verses 1, 4, 9, 33, teach the sovereignty of God, that high and absolute control which he exercises over all his creatures and all their actions; a control which extends not only to the material world, but also to the words and thoughts of his intelligent offspring, the very wicked being constrained to execute his purposes. Verses 2, 5, 25, relate more particularly to the justice of God, as displayed in weighing the actions of men, and in punishing the wicked. Yet, however men may impose upon themselves, while indulging in sin, with the hope of impunity, they shall, sooner or later, be made to feel that

end of these things is death. But though God is just, we are assured, in the sixth verse, that he is also merciful, and that he hath provided an expiation to purge away the iniquities of his people, and to deliver them from the power and dominion of sin.

Verses 3, 7, 8, 17, 20, 31, are descriptive of the blessedness of the righteous, and of the peace and security bestowed upon them by God, so that their very enemies are constrained to esteem them; and most of all will the righteousness of such be honourable and obvious when they increase and abound in it to extreme old age, and are found waiting and watching for the coming of their Lord. Verses 10—15, teach the mutual duties of kings and subjects. Kings are reminded that civil government is God's ordinance for the good of mankind, and that they must, therefore, rule in his fear, and govern by his laws; for it is thus only that they can secure the respect of their subjects, and be established on their thrones. And subjects are enjoined not to flatter those who have the rule over them, but to tell them the truth, and to obey the laws, as they will thus avoid the wrath of the prince, and obtain his favour and protection.

We are exhorted, also, in verses 16, 21—23, to cultivate wisdom, religious and heavenly wisdom, so often recommended by Solomon in this book of Proverbs. In verses 18, 19, we are exhorted to be humble. Pride is, of all the sentiments of the corrupt heart, most unbecoming and most offensive to God, and he will not suffer it to go unpunished. Let us, then, cultivate humility, a sentiment so becoming in us as guilty sinners and as redeemed men, ever remembering that God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the lowly.

Verses 24, 28—30, are directed against evil speaking and the sins of the tongue. Kind and pleasant words have a sweet and soothing influence over the soul; but envious and malicious words are the cause of strife, and often separate between friends. Verse 32 contains an injunction against anger, and to cultivate meekness, as the greatest conqueror is he who subdues his own spirit. And we are exhorted to diligence in our secular callings, in the 26th verse, as industry is the great law of God and of our present nature, neglecting which, man would be miserable, or might even perish of want.

PRAYER.

Knowing, O Lord, how often and grievously we have offended and provoked thee to anger by our sins and shortcomings, how multiplied and highly aggravated are our transgressions, and how completely the spirit that is in us lusteth to envy, we would humble ourselves in the dust before thee, and beseech thee not to visit us according to our sins, but, in the midst of merited wrath, to remember us in mercy. O we would adore the riches of that mercy which is over all thy works, and which has been most conspicuously displayed in the redemption of a lost world. We thank thee that thou hast brought us within the pale of the visible church, and that we have

been trained up from our tenderest years in a knowledge of the great salvation. O that this knowledge may be blest to each of us. Quicken our dead natures, influence our cold hearts, subdue our stubborn wills, and enable us daily to make progress in the divine life, and in that heavenly wisdom so often commended in the scriptures. May we be growing in knowledge, in the knowledge of thy glorious character and perfections; of our guilty and fallen condition; of our infirmities and weaknesses; and of the grace and mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and of all the precepts and requirements of thy holy word. And may this knowledge have a sanctifying influence upon our hearts and lives, leading us no longer to live unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us and rose again. And may we be enabled to persevere in the good course on which we have entered unto the end of life, so that we may finish our course with joy, and may be admitted at last into the mansions of bliss. We pray for all our brethren of mankind that they may be saved, and that they may be enabled suitably to adorn those stations of life in which they have been placed. Bless our sovereign and all in authority. May they rule in thy fear, and may the throne be established by righteousness; and may those who are subject, be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. And now that we are about again to enter upon the labours and duties of another day, we would implore thy protection and blessing. May we be preserved from danger; may we be kept from temptation and sin, and be enabled vigorously and efficiently to perform our several duties. While diligent in business, may we be fervent in spirit serving the Lord. And may the love of God the Father, and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all, now and for evermore. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLIX. 9—14.

SCRIPTURE—1 CORINTHIANS VIII.

REMARKS.

We learn from this chapter, that some of the members in the Corinthian church, led away by an affection of superior intelligence, and destitute of charity, conducted themselves in such a way as to give great offence, and to do much injury to their weaker brethren. The matter in dispute seems to have been the lawfulness of Christians feasting in an idol temple, or eating of meat known to have been

killed in sacrifice to idols; and it would appear that some, abusing their knowledge concerning the vanity of idols, acted upon the principle, that, as an idol was nothing in the world, a Christian might both feast in an idol temple, and partake of flesh, knowing it to have been offered in sacrifice to idols, without sin. But the apostle, while he concurs in the general principle of the vanity of idols; and that a person, whose conscience had been properly enlightened, might eat flesh sacrificed to idols without sin; and while he declares the fundamental principle of the Christian faith, the unity of the divine essence, and that there is only one God, one Father, and one Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom, and by whose joint operation are all things, thus teaching the co-equality of these persons in one undivided Godhead; yet he at the same time declares, that as all Christians possessed not this knowledge of the vanity of idols, but many regarded them as a reality, and could not feast in their temples, or partake of flesh which had been offered to them in sacrifice, without defiling their consciences, and feeling that they had been guilty of an act of idolatry,—it was the duty of Christians, if not for their own sakes, yet, acting under the influence of charity, for the sake of their weaker Christian brethren (the least of whom had been redeemed by the blood of Jesus), and for the sake of the unconverted heathen, to abstain entirely from any such apparent countenance of idolatry, and to manifest on all occasions a just abhorrence of a sin so contrary to the divine law, and so much opposed to the spiritual interests of mankind. For if any Christian should become the means of offending a weak brother, even by practices which were in themselves indifferent, it would be accounted by Christ, the great Head of the church, as an offence committed against himself, and a violation of the principles of charity and love.

Let us seek, then, to manifest the noble sentiments inculcated by Paul in this chapter, and upon which he ever acted, to give no offence to any, and to become all things to all men, that he might gain some. More especially let us beware of ascribing an undue importance to forms and customs, and the lesser matters of the Christian law, which has been one great source of schism in the church of Christ, and a pertinacious adherence to which is still a chief cause of unseemly strife among brethren, and of the perpetuation of the parties, and feuds, and divisions into which the church of Christ has been rent asunder. Let us, then, rather than become the occasion of such strife and offence to the brethren, forego our own opinion in matters of indifference; yea, let us even submit to acts of self-denial; let us, like St Paul, give up the use of flesh altogether, or any other gratification, rather than become the occasion of divisions in the church, or of weakening the hands, or subverting the religious principles of any of our brethren.

PRAYER.

O Lord, who is a God like unto thee, who art glorious in thy holiness, fearful in thy praises, ever doing wonders? All the gods whom the nations worship are but dumb idols, stocks and

stones, graven by art and man's device; but thou art the living and true God, the eternal Jehovah, the Creator and Governor of the universe. All thy works proclaim thine existence and perfections. But we bless thee that thou hast not sent us to the volume of nature to learn thy character and perfections, what thou art, and what thou wouldst have us to be; that thou hast given to us a surer word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place. We would desire ever to receive with humility and lively faith all the discoveries of thy word, whether these respect thy nature and government, our original and fallen condition, the way of recovery through Jesus Christ, or that eternal life which thou hast provided for thy people in heaven for evermore. We worship thee as the three-one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three distinct, co-equal and co-eternal persons in one undivided Godhead. We would not presume to explore the mysteries of thy Being. We receive with humility the declarations of thine own word; we believe and adore. We believe, also, that thou hast made man upright; but that he hath sought out inventions; that he hath fallen, through wilful disobedience, from his original purity, and that he is now a child of wrath and an heir of hell; that the whole human family have transgressed, and that there is none righteous, not even one. We would desire especially to confess and bewail our own sins and imperfections, our multiplied transgressions, our vain imaginations, our cold hearts, our stubborn wills. We acknowledge that we have justly merited thy highest displeasure, and that thou mightest glorify thy justice in our destruction. But we cry unto thee for mercy; we take hold on thy covenant. We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, saying, with the disciples, Lord, increase our faith. Lord, we believe; help our unbelief. See, then, O God, our shield; look on the face of thine anointed. Blot out our sins as a cloud, and our transgressions as a thick cloud. Write our names in the book of life, and give us a right and a title to all the privileges of thine adopted children. Help us to walk worthy of our Christian profession, to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in the world. May we love all men with a love of benevolence, and our fellow-Christians as brethren. May we avoid every thing that might become an occasion of offence, sacrificing our own feelings and inclinations in smaller matters, rather than offend one of the least of Christ's little ones. We would pray for the greater unity of the visible church; that thou wouldst heal the divisions of Zion;

that Judah may no longer vex Ephraim, nor Ephraim Judah; but that all true Christians may be one in sentiment and affection, even as thou, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, art one. We thank thee for the mercies of this day, for all our family and individual blessings. Truly the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, and ours is a goodly heritage. Be the friend of our friends; reward our benefactors, forgive our enemies. Be very gracious to all the sons and daughters of affliction. Grant us thy protection during the night. May we enjoy refreshing sleep, and enter again, if it be thy holy will, with renewed vigour, on the duties and occupations of a new day. Guide and protect us by thy counsel and grace while we are in the body, and receive us all at last into thy kingdom and glory, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 12.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS XVIII.

REMARKS.

In this chapter Solomon has crowded together a number of weighty maxims touching some of the most important events in life. He begins with that leading topic which recurs so frequently throughout this book of Proverbs—the excellence and desirableness of heavenly wisdom. This subject is treated by him in verses 1, 2, 4, 15. He alludes to that curiosity or insatiable desire of wisdom, which is one of the most striking characteristics of the human mind, and which leads multitudes, separating themselves from every other pursuit, to devote all their energies to the attainment of it; and especially will Christians manifest this ardour in the pursuit of that knowledge which is saving and divine. The law of the Lord will be prized by them above worldly riches. It will be daily perused by them; they will meditate in it day and night; and they will find in it not only nourishment and consolation to their own spirit, they will be able from this source, also, to instruct and edify others.

Another topic in the chapter is the proper management of the tongue, especially the sin and punishment of evil speaking. This is dwelt upon in verses 6—8, 20, 21. The tongue is represented as a powerful instrument for good or for evil. How careful, therefore, should Christians be to set a watch upon their mouth, lest they speak unadvisedly with their lips, or indulge in evil speaking. This were to scatter firebrands and death, and to do an injury to the reputation of our neighbour which might never be repaired.

A third topic, which has received a good deal of notice in the chapter, as we may regard verses 5, 13, 16—18, as more or less connected with it, is the practice of integrity and uprightness, especially

in the administration of justice, and while acting in a judicial capacity. Judges must scrupulously guard against any bias or partial feeling towards either party, patiently hearing both sides of the cause, and accepting neither of gift or bribe, which is so apt to blind the eyes of men.

We are also presented in the chapter with sundry admonitions regarding the acquisition of wealth, and its influence over the mind, verses 9—12, 23. As there are two ways of procuring and retaining wealth—industry and frugality; so there are two ways of becoming poor—sloth and extravagance. And we are assured, in the 9th verse, that the one is as criminal and injurious as the other; and while we condemn the folly of those who waste their substance in riotous living, we should remember that those act a part not less unworthy who neglect to provide for their household, and to improve the talents which have been bestowed upon them. Solomon, also, cautions us against another evil, trusting in our riches, and the pride of wealth, in which the rich are so apt to indulge; and assures us, that they who make silver or gold their confidence, would be cruelly disappointed; but that they who trusted in the Lord would be happy and safe whatever might befall.

The remaining verses of the chapter refer to detached subjects, which it is unnecessary minutely to particularize. Thus we are assured, in the 14th verse, of the superior intensity of the griefs of the heart to bodily ailments; of the difficulty of effecting a reconciliation between offended brethren in the 19th verse; of the great blessing of a prudent and virtuous wife in the 22d verse; and the necessity of showing ourselves friendly, if we would have friends, in the 24th verse.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most merciful God and Father, we would desire again, on this the morning of a new day, to encompass our domestic altar, and to offer thereon the sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving. Great art thou, O Lord, and greatly to be feared; thou art good, also, and much to be praised; thy goodness and greatness are unsearchable. We especially adore thee that thou hast delivered our souls from spiritual and eternal death. Ever praised be redeeming love, that mercy has been proclaimed from heaven to guilty man, and that a way has been provided for dispensing this mercy in accordance with the perfections of thy nature, with the demands of justice, and with the interests of thy moral administration; and that when neither man nor angel could redeem his brother from destruction, nor offer unto God a ransom for his soul, thou thyself hast provided a ransom; hast laid help upon one mighty and able to save; hast spared not thine own Son, but delivered him up a propitiation and atonement for the sins of mankind. And our souls would bless thee for the gracious assurance that there is now no longer any condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who

walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; and that whosoever believeth in him is justified from all things, from which he could not be justified in any other manner. O most merciful God and Father, we beseech thee to have compassion on us, miserable sinners, and to suffer us not to perish utterly, seeing thou hast provided for us redemption in Christ Jesus. O send forth thy Holy Spirit into our hearts to convince us of sin; to quicken our dead natures; to bestow upon us spiritual life; to strengthen our faith; to fill us with patience and love; and to produce and perfect within us every Christian grace. Fill us, above all, with that heavenly wisdom so often commended in thy holy word, and of which we have this day again been hearing. May we be daily searching the scriptures, and acquiring an increasing acquaintance with thy revealed will; and while we thus look into the glass of the law, may we be changed into the image of our Master, and become the living epistles of Christ, read and seen of all men. Help us to adorn our profession of the Christian faith by devoted attachment to Jesus, and by a life of holy obedience. Enable us to bridle the tongue, never to murmur against any of the allotments of thy providence, however adverse and afflictive, and never to calumniate or reproach any of our fellow-men, however unworthy may have been their conduct, or however injurious to us. May we speak the truth every man to his neighbour, and endeavour always to edify one another, having our conversation with grace, seasoned with salt. And may we, in all our intercourse with our brethren, be actuated by a love of integrity and justice, and abhor whatever is fraudulent and base. May we provide things honest in the sight of all men; and make our light so to shine around us, that others, seeing our good works, may be led to glorify our Father which is in heaven. And while we set not our hearts on the world, nor trust in uncertain riches, and are willing, without a murmur, to part with our goods at thy bidding, may we be enabled to manifest a commendable diligence and prudence in the management of our affairs and in our callings, that we may have enough to supply our own wants, and also to give to him that needeth. Fit us especially for the duties of this day. Wherever we go, may we enjoy thy protection; and whatever we do, may we do it to thy glory. And may these our humble prayers be heard and answered, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXVI. 5—9.

SCRIPTURE—1 COR. IX.

REMARKS.

It would appear from this chapter that there existed a party in the church of Corinth, most probably Jewish converts, who, taking offence at St Paul's neglect of the ceremonial law, endeavoured to depreciate his apostolical commission, and to assert his inferiority to the other apostles; and among other proofs of this, they alleged his want of a personal attendance on the ministry of Christ, and of a proper apostolical commission, and also his own conduct while at Corinth, in refusing to accept from the church that pecuniary support which was given to the other apostles by the churches, as if he had had no proper claim to exact it. And it was in opposition to these that St Paul claims in this chapter, and in his other epistles, an apostolical commission as authoritative and as dignified as that of the very chiefest of the apostles. He tells us that he had been favoured with a sight of the Lord in circumstances the most remarkable, and had received a commission from him as an apostle. And with regard to the other point, his right to be supported by the churches, he claims their right, to its fullest extent, equally with Peter, and James, and Jude, and the other apostles, who received support not only for themselves, but also for their wives, whom they carried along with them. And this allusion to the marriage of Peter, and the kinsman of our Lord, and their continuing to live with their wives after their vocation to the apostolical office, has ever been regarded by the protestant church as an invaluable testimony against the celibacy of the Romish priesthood, and in support of the great ordinance of reason and scripture, that marriage is honourable in all.

The apostle insists, at great length, upon his own right, and the right of every minister of the gospel, to a secular maintenance, in return for his religious and spiritual labours. And he places this support not on the footing of a gratuity, which the Christian church may bestow or withhold at pleasure, but of a debt or obligation, which it were sinful to refuse to discharge.

The apostle, however, says nothing in this chapter concerning the source whence this support of a Christian ministry was to be derived. It might come from the free-will offerings of the particular flock who were ministered unto; or it might come from the voluntary contributions of other congregations; or it might come from the gift of private individuals, either in the shape of a temporary grant, or of the annual proceeds of a permanent mortification; or it might come from the gift of a godly society or nation, acting through its representatives. Each of which modes of supporting the teachers of religion has its advantages and disadvantages, and instances of each of which are to be met with in the scriptures, both in the Old and New Testaments. Christians are not restricted in this passage to the maintenance of their pastors in any one of these ways exclusively. The only point which is conclusively settled by the apostle, and which

pervades the whole passage, is the right of the Christian ministry to a competent maintenance in return for their spiritual labours; a right which every true Christian will willingly concede.

The apostle then explains the reason why he had not accepted of any pecuniary support from the church at Corinth. It was from considerations of expediency, that he might not be burdensome unto them, and that he might not hinder the gospel. For this reason he tells them that he had maintained himself with the labour of his own hands, and with the contributions of the churches in Macedonia, and had submitted to much inconvenience in order that he might make the gospel without charge, and gain the more converts. And from this part of the apostle's conduct we may learn, that for a pastor to depend exclusively for his maintenance on the free-will offerings of those to whom he ministers in holy things, may sometimes be the most inexpedient and objectionable of all the methods of supporting a gospel ministry. The apostle next declares the constraining obligation under which he was placed to preach the gospel, the sacrifices he was willing to make, and the strenuous exertions we ought all to make for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

PRAYER.

Most gracious God, we would again approach thee at the close of this day, confessing our guilt, and imploring thy forgiveness. We pray that, for Christ's sake, our sins may be forgiven; that our natures may be sanctified; that our persons and services may be accepted; and that grace and strength may be imparted to us to know and obey thy will in all things. O Lord our God, how manifold is thy goodness to us, thine unworthy creatures, in conferring on us our being, in preserving our lives, and in showering down upon us daily unnumbered mercies! We thank thee for the protection which thou hast afforded us during this day; for our bodily health; for our mental vigour; for our worldly substance; for our social comforts; for our family blessings. May we not be resting in these creature comforts, but look beyond them unto thyself, our only true and satisfying portion. While they are continued with us, may our hearts be truly grateful unto thee, the bestower of them. And shouldst thou see meet, for the trial of our faith and the chastisement of our spirits, to remove any of them from us, enable us to submit to the bereavement without a murmur, and suitably to improve the visitation. But most of all would we thank thee for thy marvellous love to our precious and never-dying souls. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend; but herein hath God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us. For God

hath so loved the world, as to give for our redemption his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Thanks, then, eternal thanks, be unto God for his unspeakable gift. Blessed be he that came in the name of the Lord to save us. Hosannah to the Son of David, hosannah in the highest! For he that is mighty hath done great things for us; holy and reverend is his name. O grant that we all may be partakers of this great salvation; and that as we have outwardly assumed the Christian name, we may be Christians in deed and in truth. Begin and carry on the work of grace in each of our souls. May we be born again, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. May we be daily putting off the old man, with his corrupt deeds, and clothing ourselves with the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. And O may we be enabled in all things to walk worthy of our religious profession. And should we be reproached for the sake of Jesus, or even reviled and persecuted by an ungodly world, may we take it patiently like our great Master, and like the apostles of our Lord. Enable us at all times to honour thee with our substance, and to give liberally for the maintenance of the gospel of Christ at home, and for its diffusion in heathen lands. And may we be animated to run with ardour our Christian race, and to persevere in every good work, by a constant regard to the great reward that awaits us when we shall have finished our labours, and entered into our rest. O Lord, we beseech thee dispose and enable us all so to run that we may obtain. Bless the whole family of man. Have mercy on perishing sinners, and save them; and enable all who name the name of Jesus to depart from all iniquity. Be with us this night; spread thy banner over us, and may it be a banner of protection and love. And unto the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we would ascribe praise, and blessing, and honour, and glory, now and ever. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 9.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS XX.

REMARKS.

The believer is expected to exemplify holiness in all the relations and avocations of life; and this chapter presents a series of the duties he should discharge, and the sins he should avoid. Temperance is a duty he should rigidly observe; and this is enforced upon

him by the statement, 'that wine is a mocker, and strong drink raging.' When a man seeks happiness in the exhilaration of the intoxicating bowl, he quenches, for the time, the lamp of reason, which distinguishes him from the inferior animals, and sinks into a state of grovelling degradation. When Noah, after escaping the horrors of the deluge, yielded to the snare of inebriating indulgences, he exposed himself to shame and reproach. What a difference was exhibited between the conduct of that patriarch, when, as a preacher of righteousness, he warned an obdurate world, and 'when he drank of the wine and was drunken, and lay uncovered within his tent.' Truly wine is a mocker, and, in the case of many, it is raging, and urges them to the most vehement impetuosity of passion. Saints should beware of giving unnecessary provocation, and especially to kings and men in power, who may be able to inflict exemplary punishment; but when, through a train of unexpected circumstances, they are involved in disputes and quarrels, they should consider it honourable to cease from strife. According to the maxims of the world, it is dishonourable to give up strife until our enemy is humbled; but the believer incurs no dishonour in the sight of God, though, by magnanimous forbearance, he sometimes recedes from his own rights. When two contending parties, exasperated by mutual injuries, both allege that the opposite party is in the mistake, and must give in before concord can be re-established, the flame of discord is perpetuated, and their rancour proves irreconcilable. When we are entangled in such unhappy disputes, we should ask ourselves, When man, in his primeval seat of happiness, infringed God's law, which party was it that first made advances towards reconciliation? Was it man the aggressor, or God his injured benefactor? It was God; for at the very time when Adam crowned all his other sins by charging them upon God, saying, 'The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat,' he benignantly forgave him, and announced that the seed of the woman would retrieve his lost condition. It is godlike, therefore, to make proposals of renewed amity even to one who has offered us indignities, and in the highest degree foolish to inflame disputes by a meddling disposition.

Activity in business, and fidelity to every trust assigned us, will obtain the blessing of God, and will extend the same benediction to our children. Rigid justice is useful when exercised by all in whatever gradation of society they may be placed. It is especially fraught with beneficial consequences when practised by a king, for then he frowns upon the wicked, and with his very glance drives them away. Integrity in the transactions of business is several times recommended in this chapter. We have reason to infer from this passage of scripture, that few iniquities are more revolting in God's sight than dishonesty in trade. Divers weights, or weights adjusted according to the proper standard, and produced when the owner fears detection, while he has false or different weights when injustice can be successfully practised, are detestable in the eyes of God. A strong proof of the importance God attached to undeviating honesty in business, is derived from the

fact, that the standard of weights and measures among the Jews was not entrusted to the civil magistrate, but kept in the sanctuary as a sacred deposit; hence we read of the 'shekel of the sanctuary.' There are ways of earning fraudulent gains often practised in the negotiations between the buyer and seller. The former disparages the articles he means to purchase; he alleges faults which he knows do not exist; and when, by undervaluing, remarks he has obtained them at a price beneath what is a proper equivalent, he goes away and boasts of the bargain he has made by his dexterity. On the other hand, the seller, when dealing with an inexperienced and credulous customer, gives an exaggerated description of the worth of his commodities, and, by his skilful knavery, realises exorbitant gain. Bread of deceit may be pleasant; wealth unjustly acquired may yield a momentary satisfaction; but it generally entails a withering curse, which dissipates the owner's substance, and fills his own mouth with gravel; 'the end shall not be blessed.' But although a man may sustain injuries from an intriguing and circumventing neighbour, he is not to retaliate the wrong, but wait on the Lord, who will in due time redress all his injuries. Let him rather, with conscience as a candle, inspect the secrecies of his own heart, and discard every thing that is evil, expecting to hear the animating sentence pronounced, 'well done, good and faithful servant.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art a being of spotless purity, and all who shall dwell with thee for ever in heaven must imbibe a resemblance to thy character here. Help us to cultivate that purity, which will form a resplendent proof that we are pilgrims travelling to the better Canaan. Keep us from the fleshly lusts which war against the soul, and would enslave us to the dominion of satan. May we not be drunk with wine, where-in is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, striving daily to mortify our members which are upon the earth, and to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Fill us with a spirit of forbearance towards others. Though injured, may we never breathe any thought of revenge. May we be tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. As the Saviour bore with uncomplaining meekness the indignities he endured from his enemies, and was, when most contumeliously reviled, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, may we patiently endure wrongs, knowing that our Father in heaven will in due time deliver us from all afflictions. Preserve us from all those injurious actions towards our neighbours which the native selfishness of our nature would prompt; and give us that self-sacrificing affection towards them which would make us surrender any object, however dear, by which their well-being may be promoted. May

we yearn over them with all the tenderness of him who wept over impenitent Jerusalem, and who, amidst the agonies of the cross, said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. May the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus, who, though he reposed in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, yet made himself of no reputation, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. When we survey his generous condescension and unparalleled humiliation, may we be willing to stoop to any office, however mean, by which others may be benefited, and, if necessary, even to lay down our lives for them. May we be enabled so to glorify God, that others, seeing our good works, may be led to devote themselves to the service of our Father in heaven. Accept of us through Jesus Christ, whom thou hearest always. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XVIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—1 CORINTHIANS X.

REMARKS.

Scripture supplies us with numerous instances in which saints, in former ages, have been placed in the same variety of circumstances with ourselves; and if we inspected the inspired records with care, we would obtain instructions to guide us in the most arduous seasons of the Christian conflict. The narrative of Moses presents us with a striking development of the complicated workings of the human heart in the history of Israel; and hence their privileges and sins formed a very instructive picture to the Corinthians, which Paul exhorted them to study. They had been brought through the Red sea by the guidance of the effulgent symbol of God's presence; and this was an emblem of the great change of regeneration through which a sinner passes, and which is shadowed by baptism. They were fed by manna, which was designated spiritual from its representing Christ, the living bread. They drank of the streams which gushed from a rock as from an exuberant fountain; and so remarkable was the supply issuing from it, that wherever they journeyed through the arid desert, they followed them. If they transferred their encampment to any new quarter, whether towards the east or west, the north or south, the waters shifted their course, and rolled murmuring after them, to obviate their necessities and cheer their minds; and to whatever place the saint removes in this howling waste, streams from the rock Christ follow him; and little should he care to what clime he may be driven, if such exhilarating treasures are conveyed to him. But although the Israelites were highly privileged, they lusted after the voluptuous indulgences which were associated with idolatry; and their conduct closely resembled that of the Corinthians, who

would not forego the gratification of a sensual indulgence in abstaining from what was offered to idols, although they might thus wound the conscience of many weak brethren. They were exhorted to remember, that when they attended an idolatrous feast they gave their sanction to rites offered to idols, or, in reality, to devils. That they did so was illustrated by the fact, that when the Corinthians sat at the Lord's table, they became one with Christ and one another; as much as the grains of wheat in a loaf, though many, compose one substance; or the particles of wine which are poured into the sacramental cup are one when blended into the same mass. If they were present at an idolatrous feast, they held communion with devils, and the votaries of devils, as truly as they who eat of the sacrifices offered at the temple, during the Old Testament dispensation, held communion with God. But the Corinthians were not only to avoid frequenting the idolatrous feasts, they were to exercise self-denial in eating what had been offered to idols, even though, in some circumstances, no blame would attach to them. They might freely consume whatever was sold at the market, whether it had been offered to idols or not; but in the presence of a brother who thought it unlawful to do so, their eating flesh which came from a heathen altar (though they had knowledge to see such an action was not in itself sinful) might tempt him to do what he thought sinful. This teaches us that we may sometimes be called to abstain even from things which are pronounced lawful in God's word, when a peculiar combination of circumstances requires such self-denial. Paul did this, even when great sacrifices were to be incurred. It was perfectly in accordance with God's word for him to have exacted a pecuniary provision from the Corinthian and Thessalonian believers, yet, lest his doing so should subject him to imputations of sordidness, and obstruct the usefulness of his ministry, he waived his right, and 'travailed night and day' at a manual occupation to earn a scanty subsistence. And let us, therefore, please all men in all things, not seeking our own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

PRAYER.

O Lord, help us to profit by all the diversified experience of thine ancient people Israel. Thou didst guide them by a luminous cloud in all their wanderings, and didst irradiate their camp by night with a pillar of fire. But thou hast made a more glorious light to beam upon our nation, in setting before us Christ Jesus as evidently crucified. Thou didst vouchsafe them for many years an unbroken supply of water from the rock of Horeb; but thou art offering us that water of which, if a man drink, he will never thirst. Heavenly manna is lying in profusion around us, and we have only to stoop down and gather it up. But we have abused our mercies, and made the very goodness which should incite us to repentance an encouragement to sin. Thou hast borne us, and carried us, and in every stage

of our journey astonished us with tokens of forgiving love, when we have expected nothing but vengeance for our manifold sins; and yet we have not rendered unto thee according to the goodness we have received. Our whole lives present a melancholy contrast between thine abundant compassion and our ingratitude. They furnish us with an innumerable series of vast benefits, followed by a train of backslidings. Neither mercies, nor warnings, nor judgments, nor privileges, have produced on us that durable influence they were calculated to effect. Yet, although we deserve new rebukes and corrections, and might justly be brought low for our iniquity, thou art willing to deal with us not according to our trespasses, but according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. We thank thee that we have one greater than Moses to stand in the breach for us; behold our shield; look on us in the face of thine anointed. We rejoice to think he ascended up on high that he might lead captivity captive, and receive gifts even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them. As rebellious sinners we would implore the favours he has purchased for such as we are. We are indeed dogs; but dogs such as we are may eat of the crumbs which fall from our Master's table. Feed us with the living bread that came down from heaven; pardon all our iniquities; receive us graciously, and love us freely, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 33.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS XXII.

REMARKS.

Of the many earthly advantages which God confers on the human race, none is more valuable than reputation. Riches may be possessed, but 'the scourge of the tongue,' the breath of calumny, may poison all the enjoyment they are calculated to confer; but still fame, considered in itself, is a perishable good. The antediluvians were men of renown during the period that was signalized by their achievements, but their memory has been forgotten, or covered with infamy. The scribes and pharisees sought celebrity by the multiplicity of their alms and prayers, and God did not withhold from them the object after which they aspired; Christ said, 'verily I say unto you, they have their reward,' but the attainment of this boon was not a blessing, as it prevented them from seeking after a more substantial good. Reputation, though of little consequence in itself, is of great importance as a mean of usefulness. Solomon had a splendid reputation for wisdom, and this drew men to that country where they may have ac-

quired a knowledge of the living God. One of the most effectual ways in which men may acquire riches, and honour, and life, is by humility and the fear of the Lord. Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. Ruth forsook her native country for love to the God of Naomi; she was determined, that whatever adversity might cloud her, the God of the latter should be her God, or in the language of Boaz, 'she came to trust under God's wings,' and hence she was married to a 'mighty man of wealth,' and obtained that opulence which she did not covet; and certain it is, that though godliness is often connected with harassing trials, it frequently ensures splendid temporal benefits. The duty of training up a child aright, is associated with great blessings. The Hebrew word here translated *train*, is the same that is used to denote the dedication of the temple of Solomon, (1 Kings viii. 63.) the dedication of the altar, (Num. vii. 1.) and the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, (Neh. xii. 27.) and when applied to the moral rearing and tuition of our children, portrays the solemn consecration of them to God. The temple and altar were to be used only for the worship and service of God; and believing parents should regard their offspring as the property of Jehovah, which they are as little entitled to use for their personal pleasure and advantage, as the Israelites could the sanctuary of God. When, instead of training their children for his service here and hereafter, they seek merely to grace them with those accomplishments by which they may attain lucrative situations, and advance the family dignity, they are perpetrating as great a sin as the Israelites would have done, if they had taken, for their own use, any of the holy vessels in the temple, and employed them for common purposes. Parents may be compelled, when enforcing salutary discipline, to employ the rod of correction; but there is a promise that it will become an efficient organ of good; 'foolishness is bound up in the heart, but the rod of correction will drive it away.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art the Father of light, with whom there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning. Give us strength to discharge the many arduous duties incumbent upon us here. It hath pleased thee, that in Christ all fullness should dwell; may we obtain from his exhaustless stores enough to supply our wants, and arm us with vigour for all the difficulties and temptations before us. We have evil hearts that indispose us for all that thou requirest, and an evil enemy who is ready to inflame our corruption. Assist us in our spiritual warfare. When we would do good, evil is present with us, but thou canst make the worm Jacob thrash the mountains, and beat them as chaff; thou delightest to make thy strength perfect in our weakness. We rejoice to think that our elder brother is seated on the throne of the universe, that he is touched with a feeling of our infirmities,

and that having suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour those that are tempted. We plead that, for his sake, we may be strengthened with all might by thy Spirit in the inner man; that our faith be like that of the just, resembling the morning light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. We are bowed down by many depressing infirmities, we are encumbered with a burden of sin, which makes us exclaim, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? but we rejoice to think he can give us a victory over the dominion of sin; he can give us the faith which works by love, and purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. We delight to know that he came not only that we might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly; he has promised us such abundant communications of grace, that out of us shall flow rivers of living water. We would rest on these declarations, in full confidence that what thou hast promised, thou art fully able to accomplish. Make us triumphant in all our conflicts with the powers of darkness, and bring us finally to the rest that remaineth to the people of God, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM xcvi. 7.

SCRIPTURE—1 COR. xi.

REMARKS.

It is our incumbent duty to be followers of those who have exhibited a bright pattern of holy obedience; and though Christ is the great model which we should emulate, yet it is encouraging to have instances like that of Paul presented to us, in which men who have laboured under the same native pollution with ourselves, have reached a sublime elevation of purity. The Corinthians were most urgently called upon to imitate the sanctity of Paul, as many abuses and corruptions abounded among them which tarnished the lustre of the golden candlestick that God had planted at Corinth. Were it not for the disclosures of this chapter, we could scarcely have supposed that such glaring irregularities as those here specified, would have prevailed in a church in which God expressly informs us he had 'much people;' but it shows us that grace may co-exist with many obscuring blemishes, and that we should not rashly pronounce persons strangers to Christ, because we are startled with their many inconsistencies. Some of the women at Corinth had been endowed by the Spirit, and enabled to prophesy, that is, to predict future events, or explain the scriptures; and because gifted with miraculous communications, they seem to have divested them-

selves of those recognised tokens of subordination to the man which marks their place in the scale of creation. The apostle, therefore, reminds them that the woman was created to be a subsidiary instrument of gratification and comfort to the man, and that, however highly privileged with celestial communications, she must still retain her appropriate place in society. This teaches us, that however distinguished persons may be by spiritual knowledge, or Christian attainments, they are not to arrogate a superiority over those who are placed, by God, in a higher station to themselves; the servant is still a servant, though called of God, and ennobled by high acquisitions in the divine life. What is it, according to the reasoning of the apostle, that entitled man to his supremacy in creation? because he is the image and glory of God; his having God's image originally is associated with his grant of uncontrolled dominion over the creatures, (Gen. i. 26.) 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.' And what he retains of the divine image is the ground of the more limited dominion with which he is yet invested. The Lord's supper is a spiritual banquet in which we should maintain sweet fellowship with God, and animating communion with each other; but an institution so pre-eminently fitted to regale the soul with heavenly comfort, is sometimes prostituted from its legitimate end. The wealthy Corinthians brought viands of their own to the Lord's table, which they shared among themselves, leaving their impoverished brethren empty and hungry, thus making a rite to minister to pride which was intended to bow them in lowly abasement before God, and feeding a spirit of exclusive illiberality by a sacrament which should have been a bond of mutual fellowship, and a badge and mark of their equality as sinners. God was so provoked with their selfish passions, and glaring improprieties, that some of them were afflicted with pining distempers, and some were cut off by death. God may permit the frown of his anger to accompany believers to the very grave: their sun may set in a cloud as in the case of Eli, and the prophet who was sent to denounce the sin of Jeroboam, and who was slain by a lion because he returned to Bethel. Let us, therefore, shun every sin, and show the value we attach to such institutions as the sacramental supper, by improving them to God's glory, and our growth in grace.

PRAYER.

O Lord, help us to be followers of those who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises. Thou hast set before us a cloud of witnesses, who, though naturally encompassed with the same frailties as ourselves, have soared above the temptations and snares of this life, and who, in the most arduous situations, have been more than conquerors over every enemy. Help us, like them, to follow the Lamb of God whithersoever he goeth. We thank thee for

those sacred ordinances, such as the sacramental supper, by which our faith is quickened, our hope is enlivened, and our preparedness for heaven advanced. But we have to lament that we have often defiled the most hallowed institutions with our abominable lusts; we have carried them like foul ill-omened birds into the house of God, and resembled the disciples of Christ, who, on the very night of the last passover, were betrayed into an unseasonable contention as to which of them should be the greatest. Pardon the sins of our holy things; for they form a peculiar aggravation of our other transgressions, and withdraw not from us those religious privileges which we have despised; in wrath remember mercy. Thou didst dwell among the Israelites in the wilderness, by a visible symbol of thy presence for forty years, and though their provocations were heinous, thou didst never withdraw from them that endearing pledge of thy favour: their murmurings, their contempt of thine authority, did not make thee forsake them. And, Lord, leave not us; though thou mayest visit our iniquities with rods, and our transgressions with stripes, take not thy loving-kindness from us, nor suffer thy faithfulness to fail. Vouchsafe still to bear with us; and finally, conduct us to that world where we shall be freed from all remains of that sin which provokes thee to hide thy face from us; for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XI.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS XXIV.

REMARKS.

'The wisdom that is from above' is the only safe guide we can follow, amidst the various temptations and difficulties of this life. This is evident from what is here stated regarding those who neglect and those who attend to the maxims of this heavenly monitor. The former of these classes are declared to be fools; void of understanding; evil men; wicked, mischievous persons; scorners, whose heart studieth destruction, and whose lips talk mischief; who devise to do evil; who lay wait against the dwelling of the righteous, to spoil his resting-place; who justify the wicked, and forbear to deliver the afflicted and oppressed, often under pretence of being ignorant of their condition; who practise deceit, and bear witness, without cause, against their neighbour; and who are given to change, to revenge, to indolence, sensuality, and other vices. How grievously these err, and how bitterly they suffer for their folly, is manifest. When wisdom, counsel, and influence are needful, this portion of scripture, which corres-

ponds with experience, shows them to be awanting, and condemned of themselves and others. They open not their mouth in the gate, the place of deliberation and judgment; they are held in abomination; the people curse them; and they faint in the day of adversity. He, too, that pondereth the heart and knoweth it, considers them, and visits them according to their doings. He turns his wrath upon them as a flood, and their candle is put out. Hence they fall into mischief, and have no reward. Often does calamity come suddenly upon them, and involve themselves, and those whom they have misled, in terrible ruin. Poverty, desolation, and wretchedness, in some form and degree or other, come upon them, as an armed man that cannot be resisted.

But the reverse of all this takes place, in the lot of them that attend to the directions of wisdom—to the law of the Lord. They cannot escape all the evils of this life. But, when any of these come upon them, they are softened and rendered harmless to them, and more than compensated by many and great advantages, in mind and morals, in temporal and spiritual things. They have knowledge, understanding, strength, and counsel, and these, too, in a state of progressive increase. Hence, they desire not the society and the portion of the wicked, nor fret and feel envious at the success of such, when God sees fit to let them prosper in their way. They indulge no revenge against their enemies, and rejoice not over them when they fall. They respect not the vile, and refrain not to show them their dislike to their conduct, and their determination to maintain the interests of truth and uprightness, when duty calls. They fear God, honour lawful authority, shun those who are carried away by the love of change, guard against all violations of the rights of others, and diligently attend to their personal duties. Their plans of life are, therefore, less frequently marred than they would otherwise be. Their expectation is not cut off. The pleasant things which wisdom bestows are gathered around them. The righteous delight in them, and the wicked cannot hurt them. They have a resting-place in the Lord's presence; and no weapon formed against them shall prosper. The very follies and sins of the wicked are made to instruct them; and all things work together for their good. How precious then is that wisdom from above, which thus guides and blesses the children of God! How needful is such an instructor, to keep us right and safe, amidst so many temptations and dangers, as beset us in this world. Let us pray that this heavenly teacher may be given to us, and that we may never err from the way in which she leads those that trust in her.

PRAYER.

Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift, send forth thy light and thy truth, and enable us to walk therein. O give us the wisdom that is from above, that we may fear thee, and depart from evil, and do thy will continually. Lead us to the rock that is higher than we; and there may we have a resting-place, secure from every wea-

pon formed against us. Cleanse our souls from sin, in the blood of sprinkling, and let the Spirit of grace work effectually in us, that the enemy and the avenger may have nothing against us. Preserve us from all evil affections, and lead us in the way of righteousness and life. Let envy, and fretfulness, covetousness, and revenge, the love of evil society, and of them that are given to change, and to sloth, and wickedness, be far from us. Give us prudence to manage our affairs with discretion, and direction in all the difficulties of our state. May our hearts be softened and freed from selfishness, that we sympathise with the afflicted, and deliver the needy and distressed, as we have opportunity. May we have faithfulness and firmness to discourage transgressors in their wickedness, and to be helpers to the righteous in every labour of love and godliness. Enable us to render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour; and to owe no man any thing, but to love and serve him. May the same mind be in us which was in Christ, whose meat it was to do thy will, and finish the work for which he came into this world. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, may we do all to thy glory, and be, at last, admitted to thy presence on high, there to be blessed for ever. May these blessings be also given to all for whom we should offer up our prayers at thy throne. Be very gracious to our sovereign, and all in lawful authority in the land, and the whole body of the people. Bless the church established amongst us, and may it long be distinguished for the purity of its doctrine and discipline, and the faithfulness and success of its pastors and people, in every thing well-pleasing in thy sight. Let thy blessing also rest on other churches that walk in Christ Jesus, and maintain the truth as it is in him. Remove all error and corruption from every community of professing Christians, and send the light of thy gospel over the whole world. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLIII.

SCRIPTURE—1 COR. XII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

By nature we are in a state of alienation from God, and of subjection to the enfeebling and enslaving power of sin—'carried away and led' to false

objects of desire, as unprofitable as 'dumb idols.' While our hearts are thus pre-occupied, Christ is an object of dislike to us. We hold him, as it were, 'accursed.' So long as we are in this state of feeling, we cannot see God. We 'must be born again,' and made 'new creatures.' The effecting of this change in us is the office of the third person of the Godhead. We are, therefore, told that we must be 'born of the Spirit,' and that 'no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.' In this work of regeneration, however, the other two persons unite with him. Their operations are diverse; but the end they have in view is one—our recovery from sin—as they themselves are one. 'The same Spirit,' 'the same Lord,' 'the same God,' three-in-one, 'worketh all in all; for 'God is one.' All who are thus renewed and brought to rest their interests on Christ, and to live by his law, are so united to him and to one another, as to be termed 'the body of Christ, and members in particular.' Hence, we are severally compared, according to our gifts and offices, to the eyes, the ears, feet, &c., in the natural body, some being more, and some less, honourably and usefully employed, in the service of him who is our 'Head,' and who directs us all in our different departments of duty. When Christ had finished his work on earth, and had ascended to the Father, the Spirit came forth to dispense amongst us the gifts which the sufferings on Calvary had purchased. He has, consequently, given a great variety of endowments to various persons, and has assigned them also many offices—'dividing to every man severally as he will,' or sees meet. But whatever be the gifts he may have given us, whether faith, the power of healing, or any other, and to whatever offices he may have appointed us, whether those of teachers, or those of rulers, or any other, in the church, 'the manifestation' of his agency, in these several ways, is given to us that we may 'profit withal.' He has arranged the whole for our good—for 'the perfecting of the saints—for the edifying of the body of Christ.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

This passage of scripture should lead us seriously to inquire whether we be in a renewed, or still in a natural state. If yet unrenewed, we should earnestly pray for the Spirit to give us a new heart and a right mind. If already renewed, we should be grateful, and glorify our God who has visited and blessed us with much grace. We should diligently improve all the gifts and privileges, so benevolently vouchsafed to us, for abiding in Christ, and growing in him, and fulfilling all the ends of our membership in his body. We should, moreover, study that there be no schism amongst us. As the operations of the three persons of the Godhead are various, and yet combined, as the three themselves are united and one God, and as all the different members of the natural body have different offices, and yet all constitute but one body, and minister to one another, for the general good, so, whatever be the diversities of gifts, stations, offices, and operations amongst us, we should 'endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,' suffering and rejoicing together, honouring and doing good to

each other continually. Finally: we should always be satisfied with the gifts, the place, and the office assigned to us by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and strive to walk worthy of the undeserved goodness poured down upon us, even in the lowest department of service, as well as the highest, in which any of us is engaged.

PRAYER.

O thou who canst enlighten the dark mind, subdue the proud will, and break the hard heart, be pleased to destroy the natural man in us, and enable us to feel that we are renewed unto righteousness. Give us the manifestation of the Spirit, that we may know that we are in Christ Jesus, and are members of his body in particular. For every such evidence of renewing grace in our souls, O Lord, make us thankful. Enable us to have the temper of mind, and the character of life, to which it should lead. May we have that faith in Christ which takes hold of his finished work, and to which, alone, pardon and peace are promised. May we have that feeling of fellowship towards them that are in Christ which overcomes selfishness, and schism, which keeps the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and prompts to brotherly-kindness, and charity, and every good work. May we honour and aid one another in every thing pertaining to life and to godliness, that thereby we may be fellow-workers with all saints, in edifying the body of Christ, and giving glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. May we all, in our several places, and according to our several gifts, reverence thine appointments, and attend to the duties assigned to us. We bless thee, most gracious God, for the protection and direction, and manifold mercies which thou hast vouchsafed to us during the course of the past day's events, and for all our present privileges and comforts. Watch around our dwelling this night, and let no evil come nigh unto any one of us. Forgive our sins; sanctify our souls; prepare our hearts for all the duties and enjoyments of thy day; and fit us for life, death, judgment, and eternity. May there be many, too, among our kindred and neighbours, and in all ranks of life, from the throne to the cottage, made partakers of these blessings. May thy ministers and people have all a portion of heavenly things given to them, suited to the several departments of service in which they have to labour. May thy work go on in every land, and in every heart, till all, whom thou hast appointed unto life, shall be perfected, and gathered together in Zion above. Let the time come when the whole earth will be the Lord's, and the dwellers therein his ran-

somed ones, through Jesus Christ; so let it be. Amen, and Amen.

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM xcviil.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS xcviil. xcviil.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

PSALM xcviil. The sovereignty and supremacy of God, and his right to the worship of all, are here asserted. 'The Lord reigneth;' he is 'high above all the earth,' and 'exalted far above all gods' or created beings, however elevated and revered they may be. 'Worship him all ye gods.' We have next a description of the terrors with which he surrounds himself when taking vengeance on his enemies, who are designated as persons 'that serve graven images; that boast themselves of idols,' or 'serve and worship the creature more than the Creator.' From these he hides himself, as 'in the secret place of thunder,' where 'clouds and darkness are round about him.' But righteous judgments, consuming dispensations, sooner or later, come forth from his throne, and then, like lightning, 'a fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.' However wise, immovable, and exalted they may think themselves, when he thus reveals himself in wrath, they are 'confounded,' and 'tremble,' and 'melt like wax.' Many such consumptions of the wicked has the world witnessed; hence it is said, 'the earth saw it,' 'his lightnings enlightened the world.' These things are so evident to all, high and low, who study his ways, that it is farther said, 'the heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.' How much more evident will all this be in the judgment of the last day! But we have here another description of a more pleasing nature, that of the blessed state of 'them that love the Lord.' Of these it is said, 'he preserveth the souls of his saints,' and 'delivereth them out of the hands of the wicked,' even when their danger seems most pressing. When all is dark and discouraging, he leads them in a path that they thought not of, and 'compasses them about with songs of deliverance;' for 'light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.' How often did this happen to God's people in the days of old! 'Zion heard it and was glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoiced, because of the judgments of the Lord.' Often, too, has it happened to the godly in all ages.

PSALM xcviil. The judgments and deliverances set before us in the last psalm, and other such like dispensations, are here termed 'marvellous things,' whereby the Lord's 'right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.' The history of the law and the gospel abounds with such things. But the most marvellous of all is the great victory over the powers of darkness—the salvation of mankind—which he accomplished on Calvary. That has been

widely proclaimed throughout the world. 'The Lord hath made known his salvation; his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen.' Many heathen lands have already been converted to Christ; many more have heard of him; and the time will come when, in the strictest sense, it can be said, 'all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.' It will then be made evident to the most incredulous, that 'he hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel.' The full and final manifestation of this will take place in the day when 'he cometh to judge the earth.' Before him shall then be gathered all nations, and he will render to all according to their deeds; for 'with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil,' which leads to such misery, and practise 'holiness,' which enjoys so great and so many blessings. 'Flee from the wrath to come,' that, in the day when 'the Lord is revealed,' and he decides the doom of every one for ever, he may remember his mercy and truth towards you, and give you a place among the redeemed. Be also ready, at all times, to adore him in every way in your power. 'Sing a new song' to him. 'Sing unto the Lord with the harp and the voice of a psalm, with trumpets, and sound of cornet.' 'The multitudes of the isles,' 'the sea and the fullness thereof,' 'all the earth,' 'the world and they that dwell therein,' are all invited and commanded to unite in the song of praise. Let us all, then, stir up our souls to magnify the Lord, especially on this his own day, which he has set aside for these ends.

PRAYER.

King of kings, and Lord of lords, to whom every knee must bow, and every tongue confess, how fearful and wonderful are thy works among the children of men! Thou reignest over thine enemies in clouds and darkness, in righteousness and judgment. When thou takest vengeance on them, they are confounded, and tremble, and melt as wax at thy presence. Thou reignest, also, over them that love thee in grace and peace. Thou preservest the souls of thy saints, and deliverest them from the hand of the wicked. Thou givest them light and direction in times of perplexity and trouble, and fillest their hearts with gladness. Thou hast done marvellous things in their behalf. Thine own right hand hath won for them the victory over the enemy; and the salvation which that victory has made theirs, thou hast openly showed in the sight of the heathen. For all these things, O Lord, we desire to rejoice, and to sing a new song unto thee. Our hearts will be glad before thee, and we will make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. We bless thee for this day which thou hast given us to call these wonders of thy mercy to our remembrance. O enable us to count it

honourable, and to devote it to thy holy work. May it be a day of thy right hand, and of delight to our souls. May it add strength to our hatred of evil, and love of holiness, and make us walk more determinately by faith, and not by sight. O deliver us from the pollution, the power, and the punishment of sin, through the righteousness of our Redeemer, and the grace of our Sanctifier; and may all our sabbaths on earth tend to fit us the more effectually for the endless sabbath, which the ransomed of the Lord enjoy in heaven. May much bread be cast upon the waters, and much seed be sown in good ground this day, and many hungry souls be satisfied with the goodness of thy house. May all that preach, all that hear, and all that read, thy word, feel its power, and live as its directs. O send it forth into all lands, and make thy salvation extend to the ends of the earth. Bless thine own work every where, that many may rejoice when thou comest to judge the world in righteousness, and the people in equity, by Jesus Christ. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM C.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS XCIX. C. CI.

REMARKS.

PSALM XCIX. In this psalm we are commanded to serve the Lord with godly fear. 'Let the people tremble, let the earth be moved,' and with deep humility 'worship at his footstool,' and to offer him outward adoration, 'let them praise thy great and terrible name;' 'exalt ye the Lord our God,' even 'at his holy hill,' in the presence of his people, as the Jews did when assembled on the hill on which the temple was built. To induce us to do all this many moving considerations are laid before us, such as his sovereignty, 'the Lord reigneth;' his greatness, 'he sitteth between the cherubims' and 'is great in Zion;' his supremacy, 'he is high above all people;' his holiness, 'for the Lord our God is holy;' his love of justice, 'the king's strength loveth judgment;' his righteousness, 'thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob;' his impartiality in punishing even his own people when they sin, 'thou tookest vengeance on their inventions;' and, also, his condescension and kindness, 'he spake unto them in the cloudy pillar,' and gave them 'testimonies' and 'ordinances;' and his mercy and forgiveness, 'thou answeredst them,' and 'forgavest them.' The example of distinguished saints, too, is mentioned, of those who 'called upon the Lord' in times of old, such as 'Moses, and Aaron, and Samuel.'

PSALM C. This psalm refers chiefly to public worship. 'All lands' are commanded to 'make a joyful

noise unto the Lord; to 'serve the Lord with gladness; to 'come before his presence with singing; to 'enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise; to be 'thankful to him, and bless him.' All this implies public and universal homage. For this many motives are here also submitted to us. 'The Lord is God,' whose right to be thus honoured is supreme and indisputable; 'it is he that made us, and not we ourselves,' and made us for himself; 'we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.' Hence we have been led 'beside the still waters,' and made 'to lie down in green pastures' by 'the good Shepherd,' who has given 'his life for the sheep.' He is indeed 'good; his mercy is everlasting; his truth endureth to all generations.' His infinite worthiness, and our unspeakable obligations to him, thus combine to urge us on to serve and honour him with the utmost fervour of soul, and in the most public manner in our power.

PSALM CL. This psalm relates principally to family worship and family conduct, and may be regarded as the householder's directory. What David here says, in his kingly capacity, we, in more lowly stations, cannot adopt; but in so far as his principles and conduct, in regulating his household arrangements, are laid before us, they are evidently such as become all heads of families, and ought to be followed. All of us so situated should daily pray, as he did, that the Lord may 'come to us,' and enable us to 'sing of mercy and judgment unto him,' and to 'behave ourselves wisely in a perfect way.' We should study and strive, in divine strength, to lead our household to praise and serve God; to 'walk within our house with a perfect heart; to 'set no wicked thing before our eyes; to 'hate the work of them that turn aside' from the right path; and to be examples and helpers to all about us in every duty. Our authority should also be used to preserve our families from being corrupted by the admission or continuance among them of improper persons. We are not warranted to say, literally, 'I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; I will cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord; but we ought to cut or break off all family and familiar intercourse with such, and have nothing more to do with them than what is rendered unavoidable by duty. We should be able to say, in the full sincerity of our souls, 'a froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know a wicked person' as a companion, friend, or servant; 'whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off' from my fellowship; 'him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer' to abide with me; 'he that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.' If this course were strictly and invariably followed, how much guilt and misery in individuals, families, and larger communities, would it prevent; but this is not enough, our eyes should 'be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with us; and we should study to have him only to serve us 'that walketh in a perfect way.' If we were always to act thus, all our interests, civil and sacred, would be much more effectually promoted than they have ever yet been.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art great in Zion, and high above all the people. Thou sittest between the cherubim in awful majesty, executing judgment and righteousness in Jacob, and taking vengeance on the sinful inventions of men. When we think of all this, our souls bow down before thee, and with godly fear we worship at thy footstool. But thou art also good and gracious, forgiving the sins of thy people, and answering the supplications which they offer up to thee. Thy mercy is everlasting, and thy truth endureth for ever. O God, thou hast made us, and not we ourselves. We are thy people, the sheep of thy pasture. The good Shepherd hath laid down his life for us, and revived our souls, and led us beside still waters. Our lines have fallen in pleasant places, in a land of ordinances, where thy word, thy sabbaths, and the assemblies of thy people, refresh our souls, and make our hearts glad. For all these precious privileges we bless and magnify thy glorious name. We adore and praise thee for all thy benefits bestowed on us this day, whether in thy house, when worshipping with thy people, or in our family intercourse, when speaking of thy wonders of grace to us; or in our solitude, when thinking of the numberless mercies we have received at thy hand. As a family of thy favoured ones, grateful for past mercies, we desire to glorify thee; and feeling our manifold infirmities, we pray that thou wouldst enable us to serve thee faithfully in time to come. May we daily sing of mercy and judgment unto thee, and behave ourselves wisely in a perfect way. May we walk within our house with a perfect heart, and set no wicked thing before our eyes. May we hate the work of all that turn aside from thee, and cut off from our fellowship all that do wickedly. May our eyes be on the faithful of the land, and our delights with them that serve thee. Let such dwell with us, that this house may be a Bethel, where thy name is loved and honoured, and thy blessings abound. Let all the dwellings, also, in this neighbourhood, and throughout the land, and throughout the whole world, be places wherein thou makest thine abode. May the sanctifying influences of thy word and sabbaths be felt even to the ends of the earth. Let thy truths, which have this day been proclaimed to many, be remembered and made profitable to them; and may they be declared and received wherever they are yet unknown. O let thy kingdom rule over all, and in all, now, henceforth, and for ever, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXVII. 29.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS XXVI.

REMARKS

Ver. 1—12. By what a variety of expressive similitudes does the sacred writer here illustrate the pernicious consequences of folly! To confer honour and authority upon the foolish, is to bestow what will be injurious to themselves, and to all over whom they have rule. It is like confounding the course of nature, and disturbing the revolutions of the seasons. But happily the desire of the ungodly to oppress often outruns their power; and their 'causeless curses' (like harmless birds) fly over the heads of the innocent against whom they are directed. In dealing with those who are 'like the horse or mule, which have no understanding,' a degree of severity, which alone can move their intractable and stubborn natures, must sometimes be resorted to. Indeed it is impossible to lay down a rule in such cases of universal application. Sometimes a fool should not be answered at all; or if he be, care should be taken not to degrade ourselves to his low level by rendering railing for railing, and opposing folly by folly. But when silence would only have the effect of increasing his presumption, and encouraging him to persevere in his folly, we should be ready to give such an answer as may show how groundless is his self-complacency, and put his ignorance to shame. There is no limit to the absurdities of the foolish; but never do they appear more truly contemptible, and exhibit their real character more conspicuously, than when they affect to be wise. 'Excellent speech becometh not a fool.' His attempted wisdom demonstrates his folly, and furnishes materials for his own condemnation. As we would beware, then, of following his pernicious ways, let us learn not to lean to our own understandings, or to form a lofty estimate of our character and attainments. But far from being thus 'wise in our own conceit,' let us be willing, in a certain sense, 'to become fools, that we may be wise.'

Ver. 13—16. Of the various forms which folly assumes, indolence is one of the most despicable, and the most hopeless. The indolent are seldom, indeed, without excuses for their sloth. They can easily conjure up imaginary difficulties. There is always some 'lion in the way' when there is a peculiar call for exertion. They slumber on in listlessness and inactivity, wretched themselves, and involving their dependents in wretchedness; wasting the precious hours of time, and laying up in store a good foundation neither for this life nor for the life to come. And yet, with the evidences of their folly meeting them on every hand, they think themselves superlatively wise. How often do we see this spirit manifested in relation to the things of eternity!

Ver. 17—28. It is the part of true wisdom to avoid interfering unnecessarily in the strifes of others, which, in many cases, will have the effect of pleasing neither of the parties, but only of turning their resentment from each other against ourselves. Painful it is to reflect that there are so many who delight

in kindling strife. They may, indeed, excuse themselves, while deceiving their neighbour, defaming his character, and stirring up contention, by pleading that it is 'in sport;' but so likewise does the madman, who 'casteth firebrands, arrows, and death.' Wo unto them that sport with falsehood, their laughter shall at length be turned to mourning. Especially aggravated is the sin of the slanderer, who feels a malignant pleasure in blasting the reputation of his brethren. But amid all the wickedness of men, there is a God that judgeth in the earth; and frequently, even in this world, the devices of the slanderer signally recoil upon themselves. And even when judgment against the evil works of the impenitent is not executed speedily, there is not a remission of the penalty; its infliction is only delayed, so that their 'judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their condemnation slumbereth not.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, pour out upon us, at this time, the spirit of grace and the spirit of supplications, that we may offer unto thee the prayer of faith, and obtain the blessings which thou hast promised to thine acceptable worshippers. May our prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as the morning sacrifice. We bless thee for the mercies of the past night; that our sleep hath not been unto death, and our awaking in the world of spirits; and that we are the living, the living to praise thee, as we do this day. We thank thee for the privileges of the Christian sabbath which we yesterday enjoyed. Thou didst bring us to thy holy temple, and make us joyful in thy house of prayer. May the solemn impressions then made not terminate with the day of sacred rest. May we carry the spirit of the sabbath with us into the other days of the week, and seek to have them all leavened with its heavenly influence. May we remember, when we go forth into the world, that we have been on the mount with God; and though we have now descended from it, may our faces still shine, and may men take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. We beseech thee, heavenly Father, to grant unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and to enlighten the darkened eyes of our understanding. We confess that folly is bound up in our hearts, and frequently manifests its influence in our lives. Deliver us from its fatal dominion, and lead us to cry after knowledge, and lift up our voice for understanding. May we repose no confidence in our own wisdom, but seek for that wisdom which cometh from above. May we beware of sinking into a state of lukewarmness and spiritual indifference, sporting ourselves with our own deceivings, and lulling our souls into the slumbers of spiritual death. In

our intercourse with our fellow-men, may we walk in wisdom towards them that are without, and be preserved from the malice and the calumnies of the ungodly. Or if we must endure grief, suffering wrongfully, may we consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds. We wait for thy salvation, O Lord; and we entreat that it may be the portion of every member of this family, of all with whom we stand connected, and of all whom we should bear upon our hearts when we approach thy throne. When we rise from thy footstool, may we not be estranged from thy gracious presence. Compass us with thy favour as with a shield; and in thy name may we rejoice all the day. May the Lord deliver us from every evil work, and preserve us unto his heavenly kingdom. To him, with the Son, and the ever blessed Spirit, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI. 6.

SCRIPTURE—1 COR. XIII.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—3. The design of the apostle in this chapter is to show the superiority of charity, or love, to all the spiritual gifts which the Corinthians estimated so highly. He delineates the effects of love as respects our fellow-men; but these are connected with the love of God in the heart, which is the great principle from which they flow. 'By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments.' Of this Christian grace it is declared, that it is more excellent than the gift of tongues, and of prophecy, and the possession of all knowledge. It is more excellent than the faith of miracles, than the most unbounded benevolence to the poor, or even than martyrdom itself. We may impoverish ourselves in relieving the poverty of others, and yet this divine love may not dwell within us. We may sacrifice our lives, and give our bodies to the flames, while yet we present not ourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Though we were to possess a faith powerful for the working of miracles, if to this faith we add not brotherly-kindness and charity, it would be powerless for working out our salvation. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, nor the gift of prophecy, nor the gift of tongues, nor a faith which can remove mountains—but faith which worketh by love.'

Ver. 4—7. How important is it for us to inquire whether this be a just delineation of Christian love! Is it distinguished by the various characteristics enumerated in these verses? Is such a love as this an essential constituent of the Christian character? Did

Jesus say, in reference to this grace, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another?' If it be so, how few possess the character of his disciples! In how few hearts does this queen of the Christian graces reign! Which of us has not much cause for self-condemnation when we look on this picture, drawn by the apostle under the guidance of inspiration, and then look into our own hearts for the counterpart which ought there to be exhibited? Let us inquire whether we possess, in any considerable degree, this ennobling, this heavenly principle? Do we show it in the various practical ways here described?

Ver. 8—13. Love is farther declared to be more enduring than spiritual gifts. The gifts of prophecy and of tongues were soon withdrawn from the church. The communication of knowledge by inspiration ceased with the completion of the sacred canon. And the greatest amount of terrestrial knowledge will be as nothing when compared with the perfect knowledge of heaven. Like the knowledge of our childhood, it will at length appear to us as ignorance itself. It will be like the view which we obtain of an object by means of the reflection of a mirror, compared with that which is obtained by immediate vision. But it is otherwise with the cardinal graces of the divine life. The gifts of prophecy, of tongues, and of knowledge, have ceased; but faith, hope, and love, 'abide,' and will abide while the world itself endures. But love possesses more than an equality of dignity with the two graces with which it is associated. As they soar above all others, it is supereminent among them. Faith, hope, and love, abide; but love alone abideth for ever. Faith, hope, and love, are great; but love is the greatest. It is greater than its kindred graces in respect of the extent of its influence. In its first and directest actings it regards not only God and ourselves, as do faith and hope, but our brethren of mankind. It is greater in respect of the perfection of its influence. Our love is indeed imperfect; but love is not in itself imperfect. For he who is the perfection of beauty, and the fountain of all excellency, claims it as his distinguishing characteristic. 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' Love, moreover, is the end which faith and hope are designed to promote and accomplish. They terminate not in themselves. But love looks not beyond itself to any higher grace, to any greater source of enjoyment, to any attainment of man's transcendent excellency. It is the consummation of the whole scheme of salvation. When faith and hope have kindled love, they are eclipsed by its brightness, nay, they at length expire. Yes, when faith is lost in vision, and hope fades in enjoyment, love will still remain. It will survive the shock of the body's dissolution. It will accompany the soul in its mysterious flight to regions unknown. It will enter in with it through the gates into the heavenly city; and there love will reign in every breast eternally, intense, expansive, unalloyed. In obtaining love, then, we obtain all. In exercising it, we exercise all, for love is the fulfilling of the law. It is the bond of perfectness. It is the image of the invisible God.

PRAYER.

Eternal and ever blessed God, look down from heaven, the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory, upon us who are kneeling this evening before thy throne of grace. To thee belongeth righteousness; but unto us shame and confusion of face, because we have sinned against thee. Blessed be thy name, that, notwithstanding our helplessness and unworthiness, thou hast not cast us off utterly and for ever, but hast revealed to us a glorious Saviour and a great salvation, and hast proclaimed thyself as just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Forbid that any of us should receive thy grace in vain, or that we should refuse to close with the offers of a beseeching Saviour. If we have been enabled to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, may we walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as we have been taught. And when we put on the breastplate of faith and love, may we take for an helmet the hope of salvation. May the hope set before us be the anchor of our souls, sure and steadfast, and entering in within the vail. Grant that while our faith and hope fail not, they may ever work by love. May the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. And may we purify our hearts in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, and thus know that we have passed from death unto life. Under the influence of this spirit of love, we would make intercession for all our brethren of mankind. Let thy way be known upon the earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Have mercy upon thine ancient people, who are still beloved for the fathers' sakes, and remove the vail from their hearts. May thy name soon be great among the Gentiles, from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same. And may thy Spirit be poured out upon the churches in copious effusion. Remember our absent relations and friends. May great grace, mercy, and peace, be multiplied unto them all. Draw near to the afflicted. Comfort those who seek for repose in vain, and are full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day. Protect us during the hours of darkness and silence. May no evil befall us, no plague come nigh our dwelling. And when that night comes when we shall lie down to awake not again till the heavens be no more, Lord, grant that we may sleep in Jesus, and be satisfied when we awake with thy likeness. These our supplications we present before thee in the name of our Redeemer, and for his sake we beseech thee to send us an answer

of peace, and the glory shall be thine for evermore. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XC. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS XXVII.

REMARKS.

How solemn is the admonition with which this chapter is introduced, and how just and impressive the reason by which it is enforced! We know not what a day may bring forth; and, therefore, should never presume to 'boast of to-morrow.' There are events in the womb of time which are hid in impenetrable darkness until their accomplishment. No human wisdom can foresee them, or provide for them. This night our souls may be required of us. To-morrow may find us in eternity.

Since then life is so transient and uncertain, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness! How sedulous should we be to approve ourselves as the servants of Christ, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things! If we live under the influence of these feelings, our own works will commend us without our having recourse to the unseemly expedient of self-commendation. We will be enabled rightly to estimate, and not unduly to be alarmed by the resentment of the ungodly; and though we may not avoid their envy, we will not thereby be detained from the fearless discharge of our duty. We will highly value the cautions, and even the reproofs of those who regard us with affection; although for the time they may be felt to be painful. Their 'hearty counsel' will at length be like 'ointment and perfume rejoicing our hearts;' while the plausible professions of the flatterer will be found to be deceitful. Even when they are sincerely given, lavished commendations are not to be coveted. They defeat their own end, by provoking the malice of those who will not fail to counterbalance them by their ungenerous aspersions and malignant insinuations. Unhappy is his case, who is the object of this hostility, from whatever quarter it may proceed: but peculiarly is he to be pitied, whose 'foes are those of his household;' and who is harassed by domestic strifes which he seeks in vain to conceal. This detracts, however, in no degree from the justly-commended advantages of social intercourse, and friendly companionship; when it is regulated by the directions laid down in the word of God. If we be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers—if our friends be likewise the friends of God, our fellowship with them can scarcely be too intimate and endearing. 'The companion of fools shall be destroyed,' but he that walketh with wise men shall be wise.' For 'as iron sharpeneth iron,' the intercourse of friendship whets the ingenuity, draws forth the latent powers, strengthens the hands, and cheers the hearts of men. What an encouragement does this afford for cultivating the society, and the converse of the

people of God! It is painful to turn from the contemplation of such a scene, to that of the obstinately wicked. Their intercourse with each other stimulates their propensities to evil, and hardens them in crime. 'Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.' The severest judgments move them not. One alarming visitation of providence after another passes over them; but it disturbs not their security. God leads them into the wilderness; but there they continue their provocations. He casts them into the furnace, that the bonds of their iniquity may be consumed; and they not only fall down bound in the midst of it, but after they come forth from it their iniquities still bind them, and they are holden with the cords of their sins. He says to them, at last, in his wrath, 'why will ye be stricken any more?' And then abandons them to their fate.

But blessed is the man whom the Lord chastens, and teaches out of his law! His afflictions are tokens of love, seals of discipleship, and preparations for glory. When all earthly comforts fail, 'God is the strength of his heart;' and with him he has all and abounds. The consciousness of his being an object of the divine favour, moreover, gives a zest to all the enjoyments of life, which the ungodly can never experience. Pleasing it is to such a man, to behold the goodness of the God of seasons, in 'causing grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man.' Having food and raiment, he is therewith content; nor does he desire to exchange his humble circumstances for the ensnaring advantages of wealth and grandeur. He can say, 'the Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art from everlasting to everlasting God. Thy years are throughout all generations. But as for man his days are as grass, and as a flower of the field he fades away. We know not what a day may bring forth: for our times are entirely in thy hand. We are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Lord, teach us then to know our end, and the measure of our days, that we may know how frail we are. Suffer us not to hold things transient as with an immortal grasp. May we not have our only portion in this life. May we be content with the allotments of thy providence, and feel that the least of all thy mercies exceeds our deservings. Teach us implicit submission to thy will, however trying thy dispensations may be. Let it not be said of us, Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved: thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. May we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us in due time. Alas! we must confess that we have provoked the infliction of thy righteous

judgments. For we have misimproved our privileges. We have followed after vanity, and have become vain. We have loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. We have not delighted as we ought, in holding communion with thy people; and unfrequent has been our fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Instead of mounting up with wings as eagles, we have been contented to grovel in the dust. Our love soon waxes cold. Our faith becomes feeble and ready to expire. Our affections are entangled with the things of time. A multitude of vain thoughts rush tumultuously into our minds. The adversary obtains an advantage over us. And by our secret transgressions, and sinful conformity to the world, we estrange our souls from thee. But, Lord, we would return unto thee, though we have fallen by our iniquity. We would plead the merits of thy Son for the pardon of our guilt. We implore the aids of the Holy Spirit to strengthen us in the hour of temptation. May we instantly comply with his holy suggestions; and surrender our whole souls to him with unresisting acquiescence. As we are now about to mingle with the world, do thou keep us from the evil. May we be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. May every member of this family, and all our beloved relations and friends, be members of the household of faith. May we all walk with God on earth, that we may dwell with him for ever in heaven. All that we ask, and all that we hope to obtain, is for the sake of Jesus, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 15.

SCRIPTURE—1 COR. XIV.

REMARKS.

While the apostle exhorts the Corinthians to follow after love, which in the preceding chapter he had so highly commended, he encourages them also to desire spiritual gifts, which although inferior to it in value, were yet not to be neglected. It is those which are useful, however, after which he would have them peculiarly to aspire; and, therefore, he prefers prophesying—or making known the will of God, either under the influence of direct inspiration, or by explaining what was already revealed, to the power of speaking in an unknown tongue. The latter might edify the individual who possessed the miraculous endowment: the former alone could edify the church. To speak in a language unknown to those who were addressed, was, therefore, unprofit-

able and vain. It was 'speaking into the air.' The language indeed might be most expressive and significant; but it was neither the one nor the other to those by whom it was not understood. Paul was well qualified to pronounce a decision in this matter. He surpassed all the Corinthians in this very attainment on account of which they prided themselves. But in a Christian assembly, he would rather 'speak five words' by which others might be edified, than 'ten thousand in an unknown tongue.' The gift of tongues was designed for the conversion of unbelievers, manifesting as it did a divinely-communicated power: but there was a danger of its being so perverted as to prejudice them against the truth, and confirm them in their infidelity. He therefore concludes by giving them directions that 'all things should be done unto edifying:' that no irregularity or disorder should disturb the solemnity of their worshipping assemblies; that women should not take part in the public ministrations: and that none, under the pretence of inspiration, should presume to contravene these instructions, which were the express 'commandments of the Lord.'

How prone are men to abuse the gifts of God, when even those which are miraculous could be so perverted and misapplied! We ought to feel the liveliest gratitude that while these extraordinary gifts are no longer enjoyed, the Spirit still imparts those gifts and graces which are far more intrinsically valuable—that whereas tongues have ceased, faith, hope, and love abide. Let us duly appreciate our privileges, in having the devotional services of the sanctuary conducted in a language which we can understand: while we pity the blinded adherents of the church of Rome, in pertinaciously cleaving to the opposite custom, which the apostle, in this chapter, so explicitly and strongly condemns. But let us also remember that it is possible for the ends of edification to be defeated, when the language employed is not one unknown. It is, therefore, incumbent on all preachers of the gospel to study great plainness of speech, so as to make the truth level to the apprehension of all. If they thus 'preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord;' and are influenced by love to Christ, and love to the souls of men; while deep solemnity and reverence characterize the demeanour of the assembled worshippers, strangers and unbelievers who may be present will sometimes be awfully impressed. The word, like a sharp two-edged sword, wielded by him who alone can render it living and powerful, will pierce to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. So that 'the secrets of their hearts being made manifest,' they will be constrained to acknowledge that the self-evidencing power of the gospel is no delusion, and that God is of a truth in the midst of his church.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the omnipotent and omniscient Jehovah: as the searcher of the hearts, and the trier of the reins of the children of men. At all times we are surrounded by thy presence, and subjected to the piercing gaze of thine omniscience: but especially are we

naked and open to the eyes of thee with whom we have to do, when we approach thee in the exercises of worship, and advance into the sanctuary, when thou who dwellest between the cherubim shinest forth to thy people. May we take heed to ourselves that we offer not strange fire which thou hast not commanded, lest thou shine forth to us in terrible majesty, and consume the offerers instead of accepting of the offering. Realizing thy presence, may we lie low in the dust of which we were made, acknowledging our weakness, and our vileness. But while overwhelmed with a sense of our unworthiness and guilt, may we be cheered by beholding thy glory as it shines in the face of Jesus; and be enabled to feel that in him thou art reconciled; so that we who were once afar off, are now made nigh by the blood of Christ. And having thus liberty of access to thee at all times, may we value more than we hitherto have done, the ordinances of thine appointment. In them may we meet with the Saviour, and be satisfied with his goodness. May we even pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also. As new born babes, may we desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby. May nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind. May we thus become strong in faith, abound in hope, and have the flame of divine love not only kindled within us, but rendered more bright, and glowing, and unquenchable. Prosper thy cause, we beseech thee, in our native land. Give us a season of refreshing from thy presence. Send a plenteous rain to confirm thine inheritance when it is weary. Pour out thy Spirit upon all flesh. Turn away ungodliness from Jacob. Bring in the fullness of the Gentile nations. Let satan's kingdom be destroyed. Advance thine own. Be gracious to those who are laid on beds of languishing and pain. May all who are near and dear to us participate in thy favour. Accept of our thanksgivings for the mercies of the past day. When we are sunk in unconscious slumber, may the angel of the Lord encamp around our dwelling, and do thou, who neither slumberest nor sleepest, watch over us, and bless us. And now unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, we ascribe the praise, and the glory, world without end. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM I.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS XXVIII.

REMARKS.

The righteous differ from the wicked in their ways, so likewise in the fruits which they gather; many portions of scripture set forth in general terms, that the fruit of the righteous is sweet, and that of the wicked bitter in the end; thus, in the first psalm, the godly man whose blessedness continues, is contrasted with the ungodly whose way shall be overthrown. In this chapter of Proverbs, the same truth is set forth more particularly; the two opposite characters being brought into close comparison, as it were, in a great variety of positions, in each of which the measure of good or true happiness enjoyed by the one, is equalled by the measure of evil or real misery endured by the other. The instances given relate to the greatest concerns of human kind. If the powers of reason and understanding are to be applied with success to the conduct of life and its business—if the soul is to be made glad in the kind affections of our social condition in this world, or, if escape is sought from the bitter regrets, the depressing fears, and the anxious longings to which our fallen nature exposes us, then, as to all these, it is declared that the godly man hath the advantage over the ungodly; yea, it is shown, that by bringing the two characters together, we come to be comparing good possessed with evil endured. The more extensive our experience of human life may be, the more readily will we own the truth as to the particular instances herein set down; nor can we doubt that one purpose of their being so set down, was this, that the mind might pass from acknowledging one or more of them to the settled belief, that how far soever any other forms or circumstances of human life might be multiplied as instances, still the same truth would be made evident in them all. Let our hearts yield then to the impression of a deep sense of the immutable counsel of the all-wise Creator. And let us never, as to any particular transaction, great or small, as to individuals, or households, or kingdoms, or portions of the visible church, expect that the end shall be any thing else than a fulfilment in the works of his providence of what God hath spoken in his word, as when it is said, 'great peace have all they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them;' 'but the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.' Let sin never appear before our view without causing this word to come up into our remembrance, 'there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.'

We cannot attentively compare the fruits of godliness and ungodliness without making this reflection, 'behold what sin hath wrought!' For each suffering that falls on the transgressor's head, is, to some extent, a destroying of the works of God. It is something turned to sorrow, that was once capable of giving joy. And thus viewed, how exceeding great is the sinfulness of sin! What variety of gifts and talents are entrusted to man's keeping! by none

fully occupied—by most wholly wasted to their own and their neighbour's hurt: and that through all the relations of life—all the ranks of society—all the offices of government, whether in civil or in sacred things—and in all the kingdoms of the earth! Well may we then cry out, O the patience of God; who seest thy law, holy, just, and good, trampled on, and thy well-ordered works broken, and yet correctest not in anger, but with judgment and in goodness, that we may be led unto repentance! Let us not, however, forget, that for the impenitent workers of iniquity, there is reserved a day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But being moved by a sense of the goodness and of the severity of God, let us account it as something gained when we have been enabled to discover our transgressions or shortcomings, that, by breaking off from them, we may come nearer and nearer unto that blessedness with which it is promised that Christ Jesus will bless all that come unto him, not only in giving them the remission of their sins, but also in turning away every one of them from their iniquities.

PRAYER.

O God most holy, incline our hearts unto thy worship in the name of Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man. Heavenly Father, direct our thoughts and our words by the promised Spirit, helping our infirmities. Blessed art thou, O God. In thy presence is fullness of joy; and out of the river of thy pleasures hast thou given a portion to the creatures of thine hand. Even in our fallen condition here, thou daily loadest us with thy benefits, while thy word telleth us that we are departed far from thee, and have provoked thine anger, and are visited by thy corrections for our many sins. We must own thee to be just, in causing vanity and vexation of spirit to be mingled with our present state; yea, we have cause to say, Great is thy long-suffering and patience. It is of thy mercies that we are not consumed, and because thy compassions fail not. Thou, O God, mightest justly have left us to perish in our sins. Yet thou art giving us warning to turn away from evil, and thou art giving us counsel that thou mightest bring us unto good. Praise be unto thee, who thereby provest unto us thy fatherly love, and showest unto us that thou hast no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn unto thee and live. How much more have we cause to exalt thy name for that way of access now opened up by the Saviour, so that the sinner might be brought back to thee. Thou hast not suffered the weight of our sin to fall on our own head; but thou hast laid the iniquity of us all on him who came to take away the sin of the world. Through him thy long-suffering waiteth to lead us unto repentance. Through him thy grace inviteth us

to reconciliation, and the gift of righteousness, and sanctification, and eternal life; nevertheless, if left to ourselves, we cannot believe in thy good-will toward us, nor can we accept thine offered gifts. O give unto us the Spirit. Let our hearts be melted by his power, that we may abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes—that we may know the love of Christ constraining us. Then shall thy commandment be no longer grievous unto us; but we shall delight in all thy counsel, leading us in the way of holiness, and turning us away from all manner of iniquity; and whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we shall do all to the glory of God. We desire to thank thee for thy goodness in bringing us to a new day. Take us under thy care. Preserve us from all evil. Keep us back from all sin, not only as fearing thine anger, but also as trusting in thy goodness and loving-kindness. Be thou near unto all that seek thee and the glory of thy kingdom, strengthen their hearts by faith in thy promises, and let the works of righteousness and peace be multiplied. Give a Spirit of grace and supplications to all that are in sickness and trouble, and make them to know thy compassions. Regard not our unworthiness. Take away our iniquities. Hear, and answer us in peace, for the sake of Christ Jesus. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LXI.

SCRIPTURE—1 CORINTHIANS XV. 1—34.

REMARKS.

We may suppose, from the language of this chapter, that some of the professing disciples in the Christian church at Corinth had been denying that either there had been or could be a resurrection of the body, in the sense in which it was understood by their less learned brethren. There is little surprise to be felt at such opinions having been formed in that portion of the church at that time, seeing the most celebrated philosophers of Greece had taught in their schools and in their books, that all matter, or corporeal substance, is in its nature inherently corrupt. Those persons, therefore, who had been used to such a doctrine, might readily begin to doubt whether the soul, in a sanctified state, could be united to the corporeal frame. And still more might they be willing to refuse their belief to the testimony that the divine Redeemer himself had ascended into glory clothed with a body. They had not, perhaps, by that time in their hands any written account of Jesus and of his doctrine. And thus, although Paul had preached Christ unto them that he rose from the dead, some among them, still honouring their earthly teachers, had begun to say that there is no resur-

rection of the dead, while the rest had only their own recollection of the apostle's preaching to bring forward in defence of the hope that was in them, that the dead should rise again. In these circumstances the apostle gives them his written testimony to the truth, by appealing to which, all their contentions on the subject might be ended. He confirms the account of the resurrection of Christ, by declaring it as he had received it from the Lord himself, making known what the evangelists have not recorded, viz. the appearing of the risen Saviour to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part were then alive and able to bear witness to it. He declares that he himself also had seen the Lord; and he shows, that unless Christ had risen from the dead, he should not have accomplished the salvation of his people. For if his body remained in the grave, then he was overcome by death. And if he could not destroy death as to himself, how could he destroy death, or him that had the power of death, as to his people? So that for Christians to let go their hold of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, were to make shipwreck of faith, and to renounce all their hopes.

How thankfully should we bless God for the written word in our hands! Without a fixed standard of truth, to which teachers and taught can appeal, what opposite opinions, traditions, genealogies and fables, would soon have occupied the minds of men, to the shutting out the light of divine truth! Let us keep in mind that we are accountable for the use we make of the scriptures. Let every doctrine set forth be tried by them. If they do not make us wiser than all our teachers, they should, at least, qualify us to try the spirits whether they be of God, and to judge, as men of understanding, what our teachers say.

How honourable and glorious is the work of God in the salvation of fallen man! Mighty to save to the uttermost, he provides a deliverance beyond all the expectations of the wise and prudent. Let us then receive the things of the kingdom of God as little children, not presuming to judge, or to question how far, or in what manner it is meet for God to magnify his grace and his power in us. And then, believing, we shall see the salvation of God, such as it is worthy of him to bestow, leaving, in our souls and in our bodies, no trace of the sin, the corruption, or the death that once reigned over us. Is there a promise left to us of entering into such a rest? O let us fear lest any of us should seem to come short of it! either as they whose understandings are darkened by science, falsely so called, exalting the mind against the knowledge of God; or as they who are conformed to the world in its sinful pleasures, and become willing to forget the wonders of the grace of God, lest they should be roused from the sleep of death.

PRAYER.

Thou, O God, alone art worthy to be adored who hast life in thyself, and with whom is the fountain of life. By thy power, at the first, was man made a living soul. By his own sin, who was the covenant head of human kind, came

death which hath reigned over all. How dark hath been its reign over the children of men! How grievous the bondage unto which many have been subject all their lifetime through the fear of it! How unutterable its terrors, as it leadeth downward to that second death which is in weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth! We desire to abase ourselves before thee, and to acknowledge that such is, by nature, our inheritance; and that except thy good-will towards us prevent, such will be, ere long, our portion. May our souls be stirred up unto the trembling that becometh us. May we be moved to ask with unfeigned earnestness, What must we do to be saved? Thanks be to thee, O Lord God, that thine own word doth encourage us to look to thee for help. Of old thou didst promise that the serpent and his work should be destroyed. In the fullness of the times thou hast given the deliverer Christ Jesus, that he, by tasting death for every man, might destroy death and him that had the power of death. Blessed are they who believe on him. They find in Jesus, the second Adam, a quickening Spirit having power to give life to as many as he will. They look unto him, the Prince of life, who suffered and died, and rose again and revived, that he might become the author of eternal life to as many as believe on his name. O make us to be partakers with such, that we may live and not die. Behold we are yet in the place of hope, and we are invited to come unto Jesus who is the resurrection and the life. We have the promise not only of pardon and of renewing grace, but also of life complete in the likeness of him who was dead and is alive again, and liveth for evermore. Suffer us not to provoke thee to anger by unbelief. Let us not doubt either thy good-will, or thy power, to glorify thyself in saving us to the uttermost. But yielding to thee in faith unfeigned, and in repentance not to be repented of, may we wait to be filled with all the fullness of God; according to thy good pleasure which thou hast purposed in thyself, and according to the power that worketh in thy people, exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think. Be pleased, O Lord, to glorify thy word in this place and neighbourhood, and in our land, and among the nations of the earth. Bring again the children of Abraham from their unbelief, to honour Jesus as Lord and Christ. Take us, and all that are dear to us, under thy keeping. Accept, in the name of Jesus, whatsoever thou hast enabled us to do this day according to thy will. Blot out our offences and shortcomings. Watch over us in the night. And incline us by thy grace from

evening to morning, and from morning to evening, to be committing our souls unto the Saviour's hands, so that when he cometh we may be found watching, and may be accepted in him the Beloved. Hear us in his name, and answer us graciously for his sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 9—11.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS XXIX.

REMARKS.

While we read these sayings of wisdom as here set down without regard to the order of subject, one sentence being applicable to things of public interest, and the next to things of private and domestic concern, may we not, from that very circumstance, receive instruction? Does it not seem to tell us that the eye, enlightened by heavenly wisdom, looking on the affairs of men, will see in every part of them the evil done by despising wisdom, and truth, and the holy commandments? In like manner, when we see that in every department of human life to which the principles of wisdom have been applied, the blessed effects are to be traced in the prosperity that follows, whether as to high or low, rich or poor, young or old, public or private, the mind may well be stirred up in the desire to know what one principle that is, which, being laid hold on, would enable the mind to discern for itself what is desirable in each situation and office of life. Accordingly, that principle is from time to time brought forward, viz. 'the fear of the Lord.'

If we look at any of the works of righteousness commended, we perceive that a desire to honour the Lord was sufficient to prompt to each of them; or if we look to any of the sins and follies reprov'd, we as readily perceive that the fear of offending God would effectually restrain from them. The king, or ruler, would seek to make the people rejoice by placing the righteous in authority, and forbidding the wicked to bear rule, by judgment that alike refuses to receive gifts or to hearken unto lies; the parent would correct, by the rod and reproof, while there is hope; the child would neither harden his neck against reproof, nor be careless as to the recompense of delight that should reward parental cares and kindnesses; the master would forbear threatening and injustice; the servant, contented with his place as assigned to him by God, would not aspire after any thing, either of dress or of food, that belong not to his station and employment; the rich would neither receive flattery nor deal scornfully; the poor, putting their trust in the Lord, would neither seek the ruler's favour by deceitful means, nor become partner with the thief, where the wicked are multiplied and bear rule.

How important, then, is it that the principle should be implanted in the soul, the language of which is, as to obedience, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

and as to transgression, 'How shall I do this wickedness and sin against God?' The great things done by God, in executing judgment, may do somewhat towards forming the fear of wrath, and may, through that fear, operate to stir up to some activity of obedience. But how much more powerfully would the feelings of love and gratitude operate to the same end if a motive for the exercise of these feelings could be formed, and, if it were permitted to the sinful creature, to express that love to God as reconciled? This is what is held out in this gospel of Jesus Christ. The manifestation there given of God, as having first loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins, and as having commended that love, in its greatness, by the gift of his own Son not spared, but given up for us all, is presented as the motive to stir us up to love God. We are taught on the divine testimony, that wherever it does affect the heart at all, it takes deep root, and spreads, and causes to be multiplied, the fruits of righteousness.

If these things be so, how foolish and perverse are they, who, despising the divine word and its meaning, would train up a people, in the instructions of man's wisdom, to pass through all the painful experience of folly, instead of having the truth presented at first to their minds; or who would expect more benefit from those portions of the word of God which present the particulars of the fruits of divine life, rather than from those portions through which we have ground to hope the principle of divine life itself is most readily formed, and most effectually strengthened—even the testimony of the love of God in Christ Jesus, blessed to the awaking of the like principle of love in its operation back again from us to God.

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, it becometh us to adore thee as the only wise God, of whose understanding there is no searching. It becomes us, also, to abase ourselves before thee, because we are of yesterday, and know nothing. May we be brought to thy word, given to us to make known thy will; and let the convictions, the desires, and the purposes stirred up in us by the reading and hearing of it, bring forth in our lives the fruits of righteousness. O may a sense of thy power and great glory dwell in our hearts, that we may fear to offend, and may say to each temptation, How shall I do this wickedness, and sin against God? Then should we escape from the snares of evil, and be delivered from many sorrows; then should we also lay hold on much good that is now passing away from us, or hid in the earth as a talent bringing no increase. But how, O God most holy, shall our hearts be brought into the exercise of such love towards thee? They are by nature enmity to thee; that enmity is increased by multiplied transgressions, so that oftentimes we remember God and are troubled. We would do good, and evil is present with us. We own the commandment to be holy, and just, and

good, while yet it is grievous to us, and we are ready to cry out, O wretched, who shall deliver us from the body of this death and inward corruption. Ever blessed be thy name, O God and Father of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thou hast brought unto us salvation in him. In him thou dost draw unto thyself a people loving thee, because thou first lovedst them. Thou makest them to know the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them; and by the power thereof they are enabled to say, Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Make us partakers with them. Let Christ Jesus be made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and we shall know that the faith which is in him is indeed the overcoming of the world. Multiply, O Lord, the number of those throughout the earth who shall become monuments of the riches of thy grace, their good works putting to silence the ignorance of the foolish. Let thy word have free course and be glorified, till the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of God and of his Anointed, and the children of Israel be brought in with the fullness of the Gentiles. Refresh our native land with the influence of thy grace. Dwell in our house with thy blessing. Keep what concerneth us, and all who are dear to us. Preserve them by thy mighty power through faith unto salvation. Preserve us this day in thy fear. Let our going out and our coming in be directed and blessed by thee; and if thou bring us unto the evening, may we have to present unto thee some fruits of obedience to thy praise. All that we ask is in the name of Christ Jesus our intercessor. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE L.

SCRIPTURE—1 COR. xv. 35—58.

REMARKS.

To confirm the church at Corinth in the certainty of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and of the resurrection of all mankind, the apostle had given them his testimony again in the foregoing verses; and he had farther shown, that the glory of God, and the salvation of man, and the destruction of satan, alike required that Christ should be raised up as the first-fruit; and that as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. Death shall not retain its power over the body, either to hinder the blessedness of the redeemed, or to lessen the sufferings of them that perish. They 'that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some

to shame and everlasting contempt.' Some 'shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.'

Seeing that great truth had been made known to the disciples at Corinth, the doubting or disbelieving it was to the reproach of their unteachableness. But the apostle proceeds, in the remainder of this chapter, to show that it was to the reproach of their foolishness if any should still doubt because of the difficulty that seems to us to stand in the way, saying, 'How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?' How can that body be brought together whose parts have been separated, perhaps far asunder, and even mingled with other elements? or if it be put together as it was at death, how could the wrinkled or the maimed body, being restored again, become a glorious habitation for the ransomed soul? The answer is, the work is to be wrought by that God who keeps every atom of the material elements in being; who works those elements, even in our sight, into the many different forms and uses which the changing seasons require, giving to every seed its own new body, as it hath pleased him, from that body which was sown, but not quickened till it died. The work is to be wrought by that God who, out of the same ground, made at the beginning flesh of men and flesh of beasts; and who, out of the same waters, made, at the beginning, flesh of fishes and flesh of birds. He proves to us every day, by the works which we behold, that his power is able to subdue all things unto himself, and that with him all things are possible. It is indeed true that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Yet the Almighty Creator, who, at the first, even as it pleased him, gave to the celestial bodies one glory, and to the terrestrial bodies another glory, can surely, in the resurrection of the dead, raise in incorruption that which was sown in corruption; can raise in glory what was sown in dishonour; can raise in power what was sown in weakness; can raise a spiritual body what was sown a natural body; can, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, when it shall sound, cause the living inhabitants of this earth to be changed, the corruptible putting on incorruption, and the mortal putting on immortality. In doing all which, God is moreover just keeping the same order that had been kept in all his dispensations to the church, viz. giving first that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual—the first man of the earth, the second Man, the Lord from heaven, the children of God being made to bear first the image of the earthly, and then, also, the image of the heavenly. 'He shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.'

What a disarming of death! What a spoiling of the grave! Being thus made known, it is, indeed, but the bringing to pass the saying of Isaiah (xxv. 8.), 'He will swallow up death in victory.' But shall we not lift up our voice and praise the Lord that his gracious thoughts toward us are more than we can number? Shall not the name of Jesus be precious for ever to our souls, through whom God giveth such redemption?

PRAYER.

Lift our souls unto thee, O God, and teach us to bless thee, who art become our salvation. Great is thy faithfulness who keepest covenant and mercy even to them who trust in thee. Hast thou spoken, and shalt thou not do it? has often been the language of thy people in the days when they waited on thee. How much more doth it become us to joy in thee, O God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! In him thou hast visited thy people with a salvation exceeding great, even the abolishing of death, the spoiling principalities and powers, and making a show of them openly, triumphing over them. Thou permittest us to see, in the risen Saviour, the first fruits of them that sleep, the earnest of redemption, from the power of the grave, for all that are given unto him. O suffer not our faith to fail because of the greatness of the promises. Incline us, in the spirit of the little child, to believe, because the Lord hath spoken it; and to say, in the name of Jesus, Be it unto us, O Lord, according to thy word. Leave us not, therefore, to look only at the sinfulness and transgressions that cover us, and call down thy righteous vengeance, that render us unworthy of the grace and glory promised. But enable us also to look unto Jesus becoming poor, that he might make many rich; magnifying the law, that he might deliver many from its curse; making himself an offering, that through sufferings he might be perfect as a Captain of salvation. And let our souls be strengthened by faith in him, to joy in God, through the atonement, as a just God and a Saviour, when, in the name of Jesus, many souls are made rich in the gift of eternal life, when many sons and daughters are brought unto glory, and when the redemption of soul and body from all the effects of sin and death shall cause them to say, O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be unto thee, O Lord, that it is so preached unto us. Help us by the Holy Spirit given unto us so to believe. Called with such an hope, may we never cease to feel that it is an high and holy calling; and may this be the testimony of our conscience, that it moveth us to diligence in laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and may it stir us up to be reaching daily after the things that are before, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. Visit the sons and daughters of affliction, and all such as draw nigh to death. Bring unto them the comfort of this gospel of the resurrection and the life eternal. Speak peace to the hearts of those who are still subject to bondage through fear of death. Look in thy

compassions on the dark places of the earth where death reigns. Let the light of the Sun of righteousness speedily shine unto them. Make the children of Abraham to see the glory of him who redeemed from the power of the grave. Take away our unworthiness. Look on the face of thine Anointed; and for his sake keep us now, henceforth, and for ever, and do in us, and by us, exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think; and to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be glory now and for ever. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX.

SCRIPTURE—PROVERBS XXX.

REMARKS.

The sacred writings have not informed us who the author of this chapter was; it is sufficient for us to know that he was directed by the Holy Spirit to write it for the edification and instruction of the people of God. We may remark that all scripture has reference to the Saviour. The words of Agur are said to be spoken to Ithiel and Ucal, that is, Emanuel, God with us, and the Almighty. In the 4th verse there appears, also, to be a very plain reference to the second person of the Trinity.

The prophet, inspired with heavenly wisdom, acknowledges humbly his own darkness of understanding, arising from the corruption of his nature, and feels the want of righteousness perverting his whole faculties. How glorious, then, the assurance to believers, that Christ of God is made unto us righteousness! Like him, too, let us receive with humility, and the most heartfelt gratitude, the declarations of the truths of God. He who would ask of God a reason of the plan of man's redemption before he will receive it on the authority of his Maker, must conceive himself to be not a fallen, guilty, lost creature, but equal with God. God grant that we may be delivered from that evil heart of unbelief, which would adapt, by additions, or by sinful compromises, the word of the Almighty to the darkness and the prejudices of unregenerate men. Like Agur, the believer should fervently pray to be delivered, through God's grace, from the pride of self-righteousness and of superior knowledge, and to attain every day to higher degrees of experimental faith in Jesus Christ. With respect to temporal blessings he will pray, not as dictating to the Almighty, but as conscious of his own weakness and unworthiness, that he may escape the snares of abject poverty, its tendency to create murmuring, recklessness of our eternal interests, and disregard of honesty and truth. And, again, he will pray that he may be delivered from the danger of falling into sensuality, pride, worldly-mindedness, and a fearful forgetfulness of God, which riches too frequently engender. In whatever state we are, may we learn of Christ therewith to be content. The influence of the gospel must be felt in the regulation

of our whole temper and conduct. Faith in Christ will pervade the whole soul if it is the work of the Spirit. It behoves the believer to keep a strict watch over his lips, lest at any time he sin with them to the injury of the characters, and the ruin of the souls, of those whose characters are their chief dependence in this world. But innumerable are the sins in which professing Christians indulge without remorse, because they are habitual; viz. fancied purity of heart, because they avoid all open scandals; pride, which they cloke under the semblance of independence, yes, of gratitude to God; oppression and covetousness, which they disguise under the name of a love of strict justice, a sin most severely denounced in the word of God. The insatiable nature of covetousness is here illustrated by four things utterly insatiable. By the daughters of the horse-leach, Agur probably means covetousness and pride. Other great offences are here enumerated, especially disobedience and ingratitude to parents. The word of God has declared, that they who commit such sins, without genuine repentance, shall be accursed of God and abhorred of men. By a variety of comparisons he illustrates the infamous deceits by which the licentious prosecute their base objects. The indulgence of such passions leads to the total alienation of the heart from God. Professors of the gospel ought, therefore, to watch against every impurity of thought as most ruinous to their advancement in holiness.

By various similitudes we are admonished of the danger of forming alliances in marriage with persons who are not under the influence of true religion; of rashly employing our influence in society, if God has bestowed upon us that influence, in the advancement of unworthy and unqualified persons from mere motives of private favour; and of manifesting a haughty deportment when, if such be the appointment of God, men have been raised to power and pre-eminence from stations of meanness and obscurity. The believer ever remembers that it is God only that maketh him, of his free mercy and sovereign grace, to differ from another. Yet these impressions, however deep, are perfectly compatible with the most vigorous employment of our faculties and opportunities in the service of God, and with the display of great prudence, and energy, and of decision, in the religious and moral training of our families and dependents. But while we ask of God the possession of such a character, yet deeply humbled by the remembrance of our many acts of rebellion against him, let us watch and pray that we yield not to the temptation of rendering railing for railing, and of warring against the ungodly with the carnal weapons of their own warfare.

PRAYER.

O Almighty God, we would this morning approach the footstool of thy throne with our earnest supplications, in the all-prevailing name and merits of Jesus Christ. We bless thee for the gracious preservation we have experienced during the past night, and would desire to have on our minds a deep sense of our dependence on that kind providence, of whose beneficent care

we are generally unconscious, and always unworthy. Called as we have been, by thy free mercy, to the knowledge of the gospel, we would earnestly beseech thee that, through thy grace, we may be enabled to see our natural darkness with respect to the truths of salvation, and our natural inability to do thy holy will, and that, by thy grace, we may be led to the foot of the cross, to look in faith on him whom we have pierced, and be healed. We would bless thee with our whole hearts for the many blessings that surround our lot. Teach us, O Lord, in whatever state we are, therewith to be content. Renewed by grace, may we be enabled to devote our faculties to thy glory and the benefit of our brethren of mankind; and regarding time in the light of eternity, may we, by the teaching of the Spirit, know, savingly and to profit, the truth, that now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. Through thy grace may we be led to make a daily progress in Christian holiness, in controlling our appetites and passions, and in loving our brethren, especially such as are of the household of faith. Grant that the love of Christ constraining us, we may count it our privilege to devote to thy service, and the cause of the Saviour, a portion of our substance as God hath prospered us. O God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, we pray for a blessing on the preaching of the truth every where, that it may go forth conquering and to conquer. We pray for the poor and the afflicted, that they may be the poor in spirit, and that they may have thee for their comforter. We pray for the members of this household, that they may be enlightened by the Spirit with that wisdom which maketh wise savingly and to profit, and guided by thy grace through the paths of this deceitful world. Throughout this day, O Father of mercies, would we commend ourselves to thy protection. May the arms of thy love be ever about us. And having on our minds an abiding sense of thy holy presence, by thy grace may we be enabled to spend this day to thy glory. And all we ask and hope is for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRaise—PSALM XL.

SCRIPTURE—1 CORINTHIANS XVI.

REMARKS.

It is plain, from the manner of the apostle, that charitable collections were frequently made in the early Christian churches. The practice of benevo-

lence, particularly towards our fellow-Christians, so necessarily attends a saving faith in Christ, that where it exists not, faith cannot be genuine. Yet, far from every professor of the gospel be the doctrine, subversive of vital Christianity, that sins may be compensated by alms deeds. The collection was to be made on the Lord's day, which was consequently recognised by apostolic authority as the Christian sabbath, and the contribution of each member was to be as God had prospered him. Might not the professors of the gospel oftentimes hide their heads and be ashamed to enter the house of God, on the day of their Redeemer's triumph, when a special call is made on them for the Redeemer's service, that, though abundantly prosperous, they cast in only the mite they have saved from the service of vanity and of a world lying in wickedness? The servants of Jesus must inculcate Christian liberality as a great Christian duty; but they must not lord it over God's heritage in the control of the revenues of benevolence. Their high vocation is to win souls unto Christ. By the example of the apostle we may learn, that the heart of a real minister of Christ will ever yearn towards his spiritual children. Yet, even here, all private feelings must give way to the great object of the ministry—the advancement of the cause of the gospel. Wherever the widest field of usefulness presents itself, whatever be the obstacles and the strength of opposition, there, if he can select his own field, will the minister of the gospel be found, relying on the sufficiency of Christ and the strength of the Lord. We may also see how necessary it is that Christians take a lively interest in the work of their pastor, that they pray with him, and for him; and how little the spirit of Christ is in those professing Christians, who, by their factious opposition, prevent the message of the minister of the gospel from being heard with acceptance. We have a message from Christ, and do not such persons endeavour to stop its publication?

From the manner in which the apostle speaks of Apollos, who had been set up, not with his own consent, but by some ill-instructed Christians at Corinth, as a rival to Paul, we may learn that true servants of Christ never entertain any paltry jealousies of each others' influence and popularity; and that it shows an unchristian spirit in their hearers to form factions with respect to their favourite ministers, as if the preaching of the gospel could be rendered profitable to their souls only by the mouth of one individual. Believers must beware of carrying on discussion, either among themselves or with adversaries, in the bitter, frivolous, scornful style of the potsherd of this world, when they strive with each other.

It is the duty of the disciples of Jesus Christ not only to esteem very highly in love, for their works' sake, faithful ministers of the gospel; but also to show gratitude and affection towards those benevolent persons who have been instruments in the hands of God of rendering important services to his most honoured servants and to the churches. Such they ought to regard as their own benefactors, and imitate their labours of love. The gospel of Jesus Christ, as we know from the practice of Paul, encourages all the genuine courtesies of life, though it may disre-

the mere language of empty compliment. The courtesies of Christianity have a reference to the eternal happiness of man.

How awful the denunciation against all who love not the Lord Jesus Christ! It means, let him be accursed among men, and the Lord will come to take vengeance. Let each professing disciple ask himself if he could answer his Master, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. If he loves not the Saviour, he knows the tremendous alternative. He may also test his love to the Saviour by the solemn inquiry, if he loves all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity and in truth.

PRAYER.

O thou who in Jesus Christ hast declared thyself to be the hearer of prayer, pour out, we beseech thee, into our cold hearts the spirit of supplication, that we may worship thee in spirit and in truth. We would bless thy holy name that, at the close of another day, we are permitted to praise thee in the land of the living and the place of hope. But, O God, who art the searcher of hearts, how little have we had thee in our thoughts! How deeply must we lament our coldness in thy service, and our warm interest in the follies and unsatisfying vanities of this world! O how little have we communed with thee; how seldom have our meditations been of the blessed Saviour! and how little have we feared to grieve the Spirit! O Lord, help thou our unbelief. O may thy grace be made sufficient for us, that we may be entirely delivered from the evil heart of unbelief, from the influences exercised by a corrupting world. May Christ subdue our souls unto himself. We pray, O Lord, that the Spirit of truth may work in us the deepest sense of our gospel privileges, the strongest impression of the awful responsibility under which they have been bestowed, and of the heavy obligation under which we are bound to improve them in thy strength, to thy glory, and to the benefit of the souls of men. We bless thee, O Lord, for the blessing of a faithful ministry of the gospel. O for the sake of thy beloved Son, command thy blessing on thy servants who are proclaiming the message of salvation. O Father of mercies, enter not into judgment with us for the sins and shortcomings of the day that is about to close; but may they be blotted out in the blood of the Lamb. God forbid that we should be deceiving ourselves into the belief that we are among the number of thy people, while we are making to ourselves other lords and other saviours than the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world. O Lord, shield us while we rest this night. If it be thy will that we shall behold the light of another day, may it find us prepared for thy service. Hear us in Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXIII. 24.

SCRIPTURE—ECCLES. I.

REMARKS.

This book is called Ecclesiastes, or, the Preacher. The work was evidently written by Solomon after he was brought back, by afflictive dispensations of providence, to the ways of truth and holiness. Its object is twofold; first, to show the utter vanity of all human occupations, pleasures, and pursuits, and their entire insufficiency to satisfy the soul of man, who cannot be made completely to forget his immortal destination; and secondly, to set forth the praises of heavenly wisdom in its most extensive sense, that is, of the wisdom of God, and the power of God, unto the salvation of men—Christ crucified. It is the voice of real penitence, declaring to men what are the wages of sin, and the results of a better and penal experience.

The preacher briefly announces his theme, '*All is vanity.*' All human pursuits, riches, pleasures, sensual enjoyment, fame, even the noblest kinds of knowledge, can never satisfy the soul of man longing for permanent happiness. It is only the labour which is directed towards the heavenly inheritance, purchased by the blood of the Lamb, that the soul finds to be completely satisfactory. Nature exhibits a countless variety of change. The senses may be fatigued, and the man bewildered in the investigation of its causes and effects; but though it may be engaged, it remains unsatisfied, and the rapid approach of death extorts from the laborious inquirer the agonising confession, that the knowledge which would shun acquaintance with the knowledge of God reconciled in Jesus Christ, supplies nothing consolatory either for time or eternity. Of merely human enjoyments, there are no sources absolutely new. The folly and corruption of men, continually counteract those plans that hold out the fairest promise of happiness to our race. The unregenerate heart remains always the same fountain of impurity. Even discoveries, extravagantly commended, as conferring what men, in their fantastic language, call immortality on their authors, are often found not to be new. They have been already proved, and thrown aside, leaving human happiness pretty nearly as it was. The grace of God only can effect a change in the hearts of men. Those to whom God has given great intellectual powers, are laid under a solemn obligation to their diligent cultivation and improvement, that they may be dedicated to the glory of their Maker, and the benefit of the human race. Yet, this is a responsibility of which professors of the gospel sometimes dream not at all. But, however successful the pursuit of useful and important knowledge, if it be prosecuted with the intention of filling the soul with its speculations, to the exclusion of God and Christ, it usurps the place of God in that soul, and will lead only to the withering discovery, that the mind has endured all this toil to learn that it is miserable and without hope. Let us, then, lift up our hearts in fervent thankfulness to God, who hath called us to the knowledge of the

light, and of the truth in Jesus Christ, and pray earnestly, that while we are enabled to employ our faculties on their proper objects, we may, by divine grace, rest in that wisdom which maketh wise savingly, and to profit.

PRAYER.

Most merciful God! who hast spread thy covering wings around us during the silence of the night, we would again address to thee the voice of thanksgiving—that while many have been summoned to judgment, thou art still lengthening out our days of preparation. While we bless thee for all thy temporal mercies, above all would we bless thee that we know that Jesus Christ hath died to save sinners. Fallen and guilty as we are, by nature the children of wrath, yet, through the work of the Spirit, may we be enabled to lay all our burden on him who is mighty, and willing, and able to save unto the uttermost. We bless thee, O Lord, that our lot has been surrounded with innumerable advantages, and that we have so many encouragements to the improvement of our faculties. May we then be enabled, by thy grace, to devote them to thy glory, and putting far from us the fleshly mind which puffeth up, cling to the wisdom which maketh wise to everlasting life. Cast down every vain imagination and thought that exalteth itself, and every presumptuous and impious work in aught but the perfect work of Jesus Christ. May our hearts be satisfied with the fullness of his love, and our souls be filled with the peace of God which passeth all understanding; and may we be made to taste the stability and happiness of those who, justified by his blood, and sanctified by the Spirit, are become members of thy family. This day would we commit and commend ourselves to thy gracious care and protection. Shield us by thy providence, guide us by thy grace, enable us to devote this day to thy service. May we ever find thee at our right hand, and at our left. May we be enabled to look up unto thee in the discharge of every social and private duty, and be deeply impressed with a sense of our responsibility. Abandon us not unto ourselves. Grant an answer in peace to our imperfect supplications, and do unto us abundantly above what we can ask or think, for the sake of him whom thou hearest always. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM I.

SCRIPTURE—2 COR. I.

REMARKS.

The second epistle to the Corinthians, written, it is probable, about a year after the first, has a direct reference to the important matters of which it had treated. The sorrow of the Corinthians for the sins so severely rebuked in that letter, had given testimony to the holy zeal and faithfulness of the apostle. Still, there appear to have been persons in their church, who, adhering factiously to heretical teachers, sneered at what they called Paul's infirmity of purpose, because he had delayed his coming, to inflict heavy spiritual censures. Against such detractors he vindicates his character; but, at the same time, breathes the warmest love to the Corinthian church, and the most fervid zeal for the interests of Christ's kingdom.

The apostle, while magnifying his office, as instituted by Christ according to the will of God, shows his humility by joining Timothy with him in the same salutation. He gives the glory to Christ. In his salutation, he shows us here peace is attainable. It is the work of grace, and grace is the gift of God. The very mention of this subject always makes the apostle burst forth into rapturous thanksgivings to God, not as the God of nature, but the God and Father of his Lord and Saviour, as the source of all comfort in difficulty and tribulation. He rejoiced in his sufferings, because he could, from his experience of the consolations of the Holy Spirit, comfort others in their afflictions. Let us look then to the cloud of witnesses, and the example of those true believers, who, by the grace of God, have endured such a fight of afflictions, and have kept the faith. Have we not the promise of him who is faithful, that if, in the strength of the Lord, we imitate their faith, by the strength of the Lord we shall be partakers of their consolations? The apostle proceeds to state his sufferings with joy and triumph, not to exalt his fortitude according to the custom of the world, or to awaken their sympathies on his behalf; but, in the belief that they might be made instrumental in strengthening the faith of the Corinthians. He renders thanksgivings to God, that thus he had been taught to cast himself entirely on divine grace, it being sometimes a part of God's fatherly dealings with his children to leave them almost to the extremity of affliction, that he may practically impress this lesson on their hearts. But, while he inculcates the utmost confidence in a God reconciled through Jesus Christ, he directs to the use of means, especially earnest prayer for ourselves, and our fellow Christians. When he speaks of the testimony of a good conscience, we must understand the apostle as not laying claim to entire purity of conscience, but as rejoicing that, through the Spirit, he had been enabled to declare to the Corinthians the whole counsel of God. The minister of the gospel must be judged of by the whole tenor of his ministry, walk, and conversation. If he has spoken the truths of God, and in his conduct has, by God's grace, brought

forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, let those who, by their rash censures, would hinder his usefulness, be assured that it is not the man, but his work, that they dislike. Yet, it behoves private Christians, who can bless God they have a good conscience, as well as ministers, to use all prudent means for removing false impressions as to their characters and motives, lest this should be injurious to the progress of gospel truth. In vindicating himself from the aspersions of those who had imputed his delay in coming to Corinth, not to motives of tenderness, but to fickleness, the apostle shows the real ground of his earnestness. It was zeal for his Master's cause. Infirmity of purpose in what relates to the discharge of a plain Christian duty is inconsistent with real faith in Jesus Christ; but, an obstinate adherence to every resolution which any individual, however gifted, has formed, without regard to circumstances, savours of a claim to infallibility. But, whatever might have been his reasons for delaying his visit, the truth of his doctrines was not thereby shaken. How frivolous then the excuse often made by professors of the gospel, for their indifference to its truths, that they have discovered some inconsistency in the conduct of its ministers! The promises of the gospel are all made sure in Jesus Christ, all confirmed by the mighty evidences of his incarnation and resurrection, and further confirmed by the earnest of the Spirit. With that humility which is so peculiarly the fruit of grace, the apostle declares that he is not the Lord of their faith. He and his fellow-workers in the ministry, were only instruments in the hand of God, for calling them to that faith, without which no man can be saved. Christ is the Lord of our faith, as well as its end and object, and our faith must be tested by its fruits, joy and peace in the Holy Ghost, and that energy of Christian virtue which proves that it is the gift of God.

PRAYER.

Almighty God! who wast, who art, and who art to come, we would lift our souls in grateful acknowledgments unto thee, that we have this day, received so many tokens of thy love and mercy. O may we, through thy grace, be enabled to remember the rapid flight of that time which is fast hurrying us into eternity; and to look forward with joy to that eternity, as purchased for us by the blood of Jesus Christ. Father of our spirits, our earnest supplication at the footstool of thy throne of grace is, that the warmest love of Christ may be kindled in our souls. O how cold have our hearts hitherto been towards that Saviour, who, while we were yet sinners, gave himself for us. O thou, before whom our secret thoughts are open, well doth it become us to tremble, when we reflect how little we have loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth. Grant, O Lord, we beseech thee, that the wonders of redeeming love being continually made present to our minds by the influences of

divine grace, we may feel our hearts animated with the liveliest affection towards him whose love passeth knowledge. May we be enabled to show it forth towards all the members of Christ's body, and to make it manifest, that we regard it as our privilege to dedicate ourselves to thy blessed service. O Lord, by thy grace may we guard against that hypocrisy, which, professing to love the Lord Jesus Christ, is indifferent to the great interests of the gospel, and the salvation of souls. O may the iniquities of this day, and of the week, not be remembered against us. And having the Spirit of supplication poured out upon us, may we be enabled more diligently to watch, and more fervently to pray, that we enter not into temptation. We would desire this night to commit ourselves to thy fatherly care, that no evil thing may come near us to hurt us. If we shall be preserved to another day, a day which thou claimest as thine own, O may our hearts, through thy grace, be solemnised to its duties. May we go up to thy house as those who delight in thy courts. And there may we experience a blessed communion with the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We spread our supplications before thee. Hear, in heaven thy dwelling-place, and when thou hearest, forgive, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK. SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CII. 16.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CII.

REMARKS.

What a refuge is God at all times to his people! What time their souls are in affliction, they have not to look from side to side as do others, nor to cast the eyes wildly around, as not knowing how or whither to turn them; but already their course is taken; already their 'heart is fixed; their heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord;' and their language, accordingly, is what is here recorded (ver. 1, 2.), 'Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee,' &c.

Ver. 3—12. Of all the trying circumstances to which a soul can at any time be subjected, next to that, at least, in which a conscience, for the first time awakened, and vainly seeking a refuge, has been able to discover, as yet, nothing but dark and yet darker clouds of despair closing upon and thickening around him, the most overwhelming assuredly is, when a child of God, through some temporary defection, or for trial of his faith, finds the Almighty's hitherto cheering and enlightening countenance all of a sudden from him withdrawn. Compared with this, alas! poverty is nothing; reproach of enemies is

nothing; nothing even the desertion and abandonment of friends. Indeed, to one so circumstanced, all these together are generally found mingled in the same cup. But O it is the thoughts of that cup being of God's mingling, and that indignation, on his part, lies at the bottom of it, that gives it all, or chiefly all, its bitterness, and constrains him to exclaim, as in the 4th verse, 'My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread.'

Now, one thing alone serves to impart relief and restoration at such an hour, and it is this which the psalmist found (ver. 12, 13, &c.), viz. the remembrance or assurance of God's holy covenant, a covenant that 'endureth unto all generations,' and the sweet benefits of which, once tasted and felt, however lost they may seem to be, or obscured, for a time, shall never wholly or ultimately be withdrawn.

Ver. 13—23. Reverses, moreover, experienced by the church of God collectively, if perhaps less frequent, are no less trying, at least when they do occur, to the body general, than they are felt to be when experienced by individuals; and if here, as generally is, the ground of controversy is the same, viz. sin declared to be sin, felt to be sin, the same it may be supposed, also, must be her refuge and her remedy. Relying, in a word, upon the covenant, that broad and solid basis of gospel kind which has never yet failed, she, too, may take comfort, she, too, shall find peace. And this, from the 14th verse, may go to stimulate not a little her reviving hope and confidence, if in truth her people can say, that, amid all their sad declensions, they have never wholly lost their interest in, and their affection towards, God's holy mountain. Their sanctuary, it is true, may now lie in ashes, and her towers, the material records of the Almighty's past mercies, may be equally thrown down; but 'her very dust to them is dear,' and so long as has not so perished, too, the grateful record within, the record of their own heart's memory, there may still be cherished confidence and cherished hope, not only that the Lord will yet have mercy upon Zion, but that the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come; a time of terror and of retribution to the heathen, his enemies; but of joy unspeakable to all them that 'wait for consolation in Israel.'

Ver. 19—28. So clear and satisfying is the view of faith, that already, before the believer's prayer is ended, ere the altar at which he bowed is left, his voice of supplication is heard, and is turned into praise. In the vision of faith he sees all his desires already accomplished, all his expectations abundantly and graciously fulfilled; and no wonder, then, if his heart overflows with gratitude and his lips with praise. He remembers his former weakness and vanity, when the hand of the Lord was upon him, only to contrast it now with the magnitude of that mercy which has raised him up again, even God's mercy, unto whom, in every case, do exclusively belong the issues from death.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art our confidence and our strength, wherefore should refuge fail us? Where-

fore should the noise of great waters from without trouble us, and we go mourning all the day? What time our souls are overwhelmed and in perplexity, lead thou us to the Rock that is higher than we, for in the shadow of thy wings will we make our refuge, until these our calamities be wholly overpast. Blessed be thy name it is God and not man we have had to trust unto, else must we have already been consumed, instead of being privileged, as this day, to bow before thee, both at this time, and, as we hope, in the sanctuary, in the great congregation, at once the living monuments of thy mercy, and, through Christ Jesus the beloved, the expectants and the sharers of thy grace. Enable us, we beseech thee, to approach unto thee in faith; and humbled, deeply humbled under a sense of our own unworthiness, grant that we may find, even at this hour, that there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared; yea, mercy to pardon, and grace to help in every time of need. Lord, not only would we confess the evil, but we would deplore before thee the sinfulness of sin, and the miseries attendant upon it, as still witnessed, alas! in our breasts. Our days, in consequence, are like a shadow that declineth; we are withered as the grass because of thine indignation and thy wrath. Yet, O the comfort of thy covenant children! Though in wrath, yet to them thou rememberest mercy. Thou hast pity on Zion. Thou shalt appear in thy glory when thou buildest her again. In sadness, therefore, thou causest us to hope, and in sorrow the souls of thy people are comforted. Give us grace this day to behold thee in righteousness, through the righteousness of him who alone in thy sight is exalted. Let the cry of the destitute come up before thee; and looking each of us towards thee as the gracious restorer of Zion's children, may Judah rejoice and Israel be glad. Thou, Lord, art everlasting; but we are perishing: thou endurest; but we are of none abiding. It is of thy great mercy that we have been permitted to see the light of another returning sabbath. Grant, we beseech thee, that waiting upon thee this day in the sanctuary, its services may to us be sweet, and its exercises refreshing unto our souls. And now to the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CIII. 13.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

This is peculiarly a psalm of thanksgiving; it is a song of praise, wherein the believer (ver. 1—5.) retiring, as it were, within himself, holds converse and communion with his own soul; and out of the multitude of God's mercies, variously vouchsafed, but all of them sweetly treasured there, he seeks to stir up that soul by 'putting it in remembrance.'

Ver. 6—10. From the believer's own experience of the almighty Maker's mercy, as well as by reference to God's dealings generally toward the church in all ages, he takes occasion herein to instruct and encourage others to wait upon him in like manner, and to trust in him, seeing 'he executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.'

In verses 11—13, we have this same mercy farther set forth by three very apposite and natural images, such as are intelligible to every understanding, and cheering and encouraging to every willing heart. The two former exalting, by reason of the idea of height and distance usually attached to them; and the latter sweetly constraining, from the impression which it naturally conveys of tenderness, compassion, and love. 'As the heaven is high above the earth,' &c.; 'as far as east is from the west,' &c.; 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.'

Ver. 15—17. Not all the natural frailty of man; not his inferiority in place, or station, or physical condition, will ever stand in the way of God's mercy toward him; nothing, in short, but sin, continued, obstinate, and persevering sin. God's mercy, on the contrary, through these becomes magnified; and the contrast of man's weakness serves only to bring forth, in bolder relief, the character of God's eternal and unchanging love.

Ver. 17, 18. Limited as the manifestation of this mercy must necessarily be in the case of individuals, by reason of the shortness of the period during which they can personally enjoy it, it finds exercise, nevertheless, in a manner more befitting its infinitude, by descending downward to posterity, and there flowing fresh, and copious, and clear as ever, in the sight and experience of 'children's children.' Being one in covenant, as they are one in spirit, they become no less one in the enjoyment, likewise, of the same blissful and gracious experience.

Ver. 19—22. The more the psalmist indulges in this heavenly contemplation, the more is his heart filled with rapture and his tongue with praise. And yet, conscious at the same time of his own inadequacy thereto, as he could wish to proclaim it, in very self-relief he calls aloud to others, to those intelligences above, higher and holier than he, and therefore worthier, in his estimation, of the honour, to aid him in this ascription; and yet, far from silencing his own expression of ardent gratitude, his fervour is still the same, and his language the same. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How needful and how profitable for each of us to indulge, from time to time, with David in similar contemplation! that thus musing on the divine mercy, the fire of love and gratitude may be made to burn anew within us, and we be prepared the rather to 'speak unto God with our tongue' the language at once of grateful affection and of adoring praise. Without exercise such as this, our holiest principles would soon degenerate, and our warmest affections and feelings would shortly suffer sensible decline.

Ver. 2—6. How manifold are God's mercies toward them that fear him! If we would earnestly set about the inquiry, as experienced even of ourselves, we should soon find them more by far than we could number. Are our souls, then, filled with a like adoring gratitude? Are we alike burdened under a sense of our own inadequacy to show forth aright all his praise? Drawing near to his footstool in humble spirit, how gracious the welcome! How cheering the encouragement that awaits us there, in and through the mediation of the Lord Christ Jesus! 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.'

As the frailty and mortality inseparable from our present and earthly condition, are found to operate in no degree against us in our approaches, at any time, to the heavenly footstool, the consideration of them ought to be allowed, at least, to influence ourselves, both in hastening now, and in multiplying hence, our approaches thither, so that, enjoying this and other valued privileges in our day, we may leave them with comfort and confidence in the end to be inherited in turn by our 'children's children.'

PRAYER.

O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Thou hast set thy glory above the heavens. Nevertheless, exalted as thou art in thy heavenly excellency, yet thou condescendest to visit, and even to dwell, with man upon the earth, so that ourselves can testify of thy goodness, and our own lips show forth thy wondrous praise. Bless the Lord, then, O our souls, and all that is within us bless his holy name; bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits. Adored be thy name thou hast not confined thy grace and mercy to former generations; but thy ways made known to Moses of old, and thine acts to Israel's sons, have not only been extended unto, but enlarged in our day. Nevertheless, gracious Father, it becometh us to confess, that these thy mercies we have not appreciated, and our privileges in the gospel we have not improved, and justly mightest thou, in times past, have visited us accordingly. Yet, blessed be thy name, thou hast not so dealt with us after our sins, nor so rewarded us according to our iniquities. O that our minds and hearts may hence be turned toward thee as a merciful Father, and a kind, and gracious, and compas-

sionate God. May the love of Christ constrain, may the grace of the Spirit sanctify us, that as far as east is from the west, so far may be removed our transgressions from us. Daily art thou reminding us, Lord, of our frailty and mortality, that our days are as the grass, our lives but as an handbreadth. O that this consideration may lead us to close the more readily with, and to cling the faster unto, that refuge which mercy hath provided, and the gospel hath made sure. We bless thee, Lord, for the opportunity already enjoyed of meeting together this day in thy house of prayer, and so having the remembrance of thy loving-kindness renewed to us in the morning. O that we may be the rather quickened thereby to show forth, in turn, thy faithfulness this night. Take us now, we beseech thee, under the shadow of thy wing; and may all dear unto us equally enjoy the comforts of thy protection and the sweetness of thy fellowship. Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach. May the heathen every where speedily come to know and to appreciate thy character; and may all that oppose themselves now, soon be made to acknowledge and to bow before thy power. Hear, Lord, and accept these our humble prayers. Pardon thou our imperfect services. And all that we ask, and all that we hope for, is in and through Christ, our strength and Redeemer. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXVI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—ECCLESIASTES II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The Preacher in this chapter but resumes the inquiry instituted in the former, into the origin and source of all true happiness. With sore disappointment he had already ransacked all the treasures of mere intellectual wisdom, and purposes for himself now the free and unrestrained enjoyment of every sensual pleasure; but ah! miserable resource for a mind already so far miserable. What had been before but bare disappointment, quickly resolves itself into positive self-loathing and unspeakable disgust.

Forced, then, to flee from such grosser delights, he seeks next a resource in lighter vanities, in the follies and amusements of a gay, a worldly, and what is generally termed a fashionable life. But, alas! his conclusion hence was still abundantly pitiable. 'Behold,' says he (ver. 11.), 'all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there is no profit under the sun.'

Groping still in that path, however, every fountain in which had already proved bitter, and never once aspiring into a region at all above or beyond it, we see him contenting himself now with a simple re-

vision of those schemes already tested, resolving, since none was found perfect, to abide by the one from among them which of evil seemed to involve the least (all the triumph which proud philosophy can boast of); and fixing, accordingly, upon the first, this is his judgment regarding it (ver. 13.): 'When I saw that wisdom (i. e. the pursuits of intellect and science) excelleth folly (i. e. the pleasures of the world and of sense) as far as light excelleth darkness.'

But what, after all, has his conclusion gained him? He has fallen, to be sure, on a somewhat lesser evil; but has he therefore comfort? Is his grand object yet accomplished, and is he now contented and happy? O no. It promised the most, but still it proved perverse (ver. 15.); 'Then I said in my heart that this is also vanity.'

Ver. 17—23. Scared thus and disappointed on every side, it is hatred of life, and all its enjoyments together, that for a while succeeds; so that, pining under all the plaintiveness of a morbid and self-destroying spirit, he can no longer enjoy his 'good things' himself, and far less can he tolerate the thought of merely storing them up for others 'who should come after him;' and this, accordingly, he soon finds 'is also vanity.' The conclusion reached now, therefore (ver. 24 to the end), is, that where worldly substance is, there providence intended it should be cheerfully and thankfully enjoyed; a conclusion, doubtless, which has soundness in it. Taken in connection especially with verse 26, and those principles of moderation and purity which God's word inculcates, still, nevertheless, there is a mingling at the best, and an obscurity about it, as here expressed, which evinces that all that he had yet reached was but the glimmering of 'truth' rather than the clear, and broad, and solid principle wherewith his argument closes in the end. It still falls grievously short of that which the bible tells us is needful, and which alone is fitted, according to the wisdom of the Spirit, to fill the capacity, and to satisfy the cravings, of an immortal mind.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1st. What a comment have we got here in the absolute futility of all human device to secure for a heart unchanged either settlement or peace! Let a soul once set aside the dictates of heavenly wisdom, and those principles of divine truth which God and scripture do so clearly reveal, and seek for happiness through some by-paths of his own, and how soon is it manifested that the light that is in him is darkness, and how great is that darkness!

2d. How deeply do we stand indebted to God for the light, and knowledge, and purity set forth in his holy word, which, according as these affect the life and character, must no less promote the happiness even of the present state! and how true in experience, therefore, as well as strong in apostolic authority (1 Tim. iv. 8.), that godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

3d. Considering the result of Solomon's experience as above narrated, and the testimony unequivocal there subjoined, against the capability of any such

schemes as those attempted to command desired happiness, how strange that these should be the very methods, notwithstanding, eagerly put forth by the worldly still, instead of the assumption of gospel faith and of gospel principle, which alone can secure it! Does it not just go to prove very palpably the deep corruptness and obduracy of the human heart, that, with all that true religion hath to commend it, it should always be the last that men will have recourse unto; and how needful, consequently, to beings so constituted, not only the light of God's word to clear our way, but the influence of God's Spirit so to change, and to elevate, and to purify the heart, that we may be brought to choose for ourselves and adopt that way; and not certainly until we be so influenced, and so directed from above, will the ultimate and really sound conclusion at which the wise man at length arrives (chap. xii. 13.), in a practical sense, be made ours, viz. 'Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man,' solemnly and powerfully enforced in the closing verse though that sentiment be, 'for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.'

PRAYER.

Enable us, O Lord, to draw near unto thee this morning under a deep sense of our obligations unto thee, and of our entire dependence upon thee for every needful blessing. None, Lord, but thy providence can minister unto our necessities, and nothing but thine abundant grace in Christ Jesus can meet the wants, or fully and effectively supply the exigencies of our souls. O that we had grace given us to teach us this dependence, and that we might be led from day to day to give practical proof and demonstration thereof, by casting ourselves upon thee, and seeking our refuge alone on thy faithfulness. But, alas! O Lord, we have not only forfeited thy favour by our sins, but we have thought to satisfy ourselves without it. We have sought, in this respect, the living among the dead, and have said, Peace, peace, to our souls, when there could be no peace. How often and how foolishly have we looked to things without for that comfort and security which are alone to be found in thee! We have said unto ourselves, Lo! here, and lo! there, are these to be found; but, alas! we only deceived ourselves; our foundation was in the dust, instead of resting with thyself on the holy mountains. Thy people, in a word, have committed two evils; we have forsaken thee, the fountain of living waters, and have been hewing to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which could hold no water. And often, O Lord, as we have been deceived thereby, and often as we have been disappointed through our own devices, still have we had recourse but to another and another such, neither holier nor better than any which

preceded them, and respecting which we had repeatedly declared, This also is vanity. True, indeed, our own wickedness might now well correct us, and our own repeated backslidings might well reprove us; yet, alas! our own experience, in times past, but too sadly confirms the truth and the testimony of thy word, that without thy teaching, without the convicting, enlightening, sanctifying influences of thy grace, all is, and will be, ineffectual; all doth but end in vanity and in vexation of spirit. We come, therefore, O Lord, to thee. Lord, we plead with thee, we plead the merits of him who alone hath merit, and who suffered and died for us, that we might have access to thee through him; and instead of saying, as before, Who will show us any good? we would make this the language of our prayer, Lord, do thou, for Christ's sake, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us. For his sake pardon, and through his grace help us, and delivering our souls from evil in time, be our exceeding great reward throughout eternity. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXVI. 5.

SCRIPTURE—2 COR. II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

This chapter, like the preceding, is partly apologetic, partly doctrinal or instructive. The apostle here puts his continued absence from them on the ground of pure forbearance on his part, and tender regard to themselves. It is painful to Christ's ministers to be ever finding fault, while it prejudices that very gospel, whose spirit is so opposite, which they are commissioned to teach.

Ver. 5—9. The gross sinner once reclaimed, and others made to fear, the great end of church discipline is then accomplished, and its censures, accordingly, at first salutary and needful, are thence to be withdrawn. 'He hath not grieved us but in part,' intimating that his grief, in that painful case, had been greatly counterbalanced by their general steadfastness.

Ver. 10. In the person of Christ, that is, with all the authority of Christ as the divine Head, or in the presence of Christ; intimating, that what he said or did in that matter was with all the solemnity of one who felt that he was answerable therein to Christ as the Judge.

Ver. 14, to the end. The illustration employed in these beautiful verses is taken evidently from the custom of the Roman triumph, wherein the victorious general, seated in a splendid chariot, was, with kingly honours, drawn through the city to the capitol. To the captive kings and princes, together with the spoils, led in procession before the chariot, the apostle particularly alludes: 'Always causeth us to

triumph in Christ,' or leadeth us in triumph, as it might be translated; thus putting himself and fellow-apostles, as it were, in their place, and rejoicing that, in the glorious triumph of grace, they should be led through the world as monuments of that triumph, yielding thereby honour to God and their victorious King, Christ Jesus, and casting, at the same time, an odour around them (alluding, also, to the fragrant incense which, on such occasions, issued from the temples), which, while it might prove a savour of life unto some—to all who would not bow themselves to the victor's authority—should prove, nevertheless, a savour of life unto others, even to as many as should obey and believe in his name. *Note.* At the conclusion of the triumphal procession, the captives were consigned to death or to liberty at the pleasure of the victor.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

No kind of charity usually calls forth so little sympathy, or meets in general with so equivocal a welcome, as charity to souls; and seldom is the faithfulness of the affectionate pastor put to severer trial, than when, in the exercise of that charity, reproof is found to be necessary. Yet, forbearance in such case he knows to be cruelty, and to withhold would be to injure, if not to ruin, an immortal soul. *Note.* How often do the declensions and backslidings of ungodly professors cause far greater anguish to pious friends and faithful ministers than to themselves! (Psalm cxix. 136.) 'Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.'

How merciful and compassionate the spirit and principles of the gospel! It takes 'no pleasure in the death of the wicked,' or in the perpetual exclusion of the guilty offender from the pale of its privileges; but on approved evidence of contrition and penitence, restores and welcomes back again, that all things may be done for the 'use of edifying.'

Learn the solicitude of every godly minister after the spiritual welfare of his people; and mark, at the same time, what obligation rests upon persons and congregations so blessed, to be tender in turn of their pastor's spirit, seeing, by unnecessary delays, or undue reserve on their parts, his spirit may be troubled, and his usefulness, it may be, hindered to themselves and others.

How rich the grace of God which accompanies the gospel, and how many and great the victories which it achieves! What the enlargement in midst of straits! What the comforts, in midst of difficulties, enjoyed by those who faithfully and freely publish it! In every weakness they are strong; and whether triumphing themselves, or led in triumph, the sweet savour, or odour, of their Master's presence and power is sure to accompany them; and whether yielding life, or scattering death, it is to his glory, to the glory of his mercy, or of his righteous and heavenly power.

But how very solemn the position occupied by the ministers of Christ in undertaking and instrumentally carrying out this work! Is it any wonder that their hearts should at times be overwhelmed, and their expression be, Who is sufficient for those things? or that turning, with intensity of interest and earnest-

ness, unto those among whom they labour, this should be their request to them, 'Brethren, pray for us.' Nevertheless, in certain respects, the position of every people and congregation, so blessed with the faithful word, is almost equally solemn. Never does the ministration of that word leave any as it found them. The savour of God has been there; and while it ascends daily unto him, wafting praise unto his name, it is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death, unto them, according as they receive or reject, despise or improve it. How emphatic in this light the exhortation of the Saviour (Luke viii. 18.), 'Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art the Father of mercies, and the God of consolation, in thee will we put our trust. Thou art a refuge for us. Thou art a holy God, and we will bow before thee with reverence. Thou art a merciful and compassionate Jehovah, a reconciled Father in Christ to thy people, and with humble confidence will we approach unto thy footstool. Blessed be thy name that a way of access hath thus been opened up, and Jesus offered himself a ransom for us. Enable us, O Lord, to lay hold upon him in faith. Give us a participation in his mercy, an interest in his death, and a portion and a part in his glorious resurrection. O that the blood of Christ, which alone can justify, may cleanse us from all our sin; and that the Spirit of Christ, which alone can sanctify, may fit and prepare us for the enjoyment of thee in heaven. Were it not, Lord, that there is forgiveness with thee, we must ere now have perished in our iniquities; and instead of meeting together at this time around our family altar, we might have been reaping elsewhere the portion of the impenitent and unbelieving, thy mercy for ever turned from us, and our prayer from thee. O that this very consideration may be blessed of thee for the solemnizing of our hearts, for the deepening of our convictions, and for confirming the obligations under which we lie to love, honour, and obey thee. May the Holy Spirit himself help our infirmities; and leading us onward to higher and higher degrees of advancing holiness, render us conformable at last to thine own divine image. Let the prayer of the destitute, Lord, be heard, the mourner comforted, and the saints' desire every where accomplished and fulfilled. Bless us, we entreat thee, as a family, and as members of that community, civil and sacred, to which we belong. May thy name be universally honoured, and the sweet savour of Christ be universally diffused. Take us now, we pray, under thy preserving and protecting care. Watch over us, and all dear unto us, for good. Spare us, if it

be thy blessed will, to see the light of a new day. And prepare us for whatever thou hast prepared for us, and the glory everlasting be thine own. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XVI. 5—8.

SCRIPTURE—ECCLES. III.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—10. Men are passing from one condition, and from one state of feeling to another, during all the time they are in this changeable world. Such is the variety, and such the unceasing character of their employments, that it would almost appear that they have no profit in that wherein they labour. But all this is given of God, in order that they may be exercised in their hearts, and trained for heaven by them. Ver. 11—15. As we know who reigns above all, we may rest assured that these arrangements are beautiful, that is, wise and good; yea, even so is that by which man who is meant for better things, nevertheless takes such an interest in the matters of this world, as to engage in them with ardour. Yet, after all, the use of them is to honour God when employed with them, and in the enjoyment of them. The same course of labour and of duty belongs to every age. Where there are duties, there is accountableness. Ver. 16, 17. The unjust judge will yet meet with one who hath no unrighteousness, who will reverse his judgments, and judge himself. Ver. 18—21. There is a tendency in men to forget their humble estate. In many respects their lot is like that of the creatures beneath them; like them, they return to dust. For all that appears at the close of life, you would not know that man was intended for immortality. This should make him humble. Ver. 22. We should now seek to live in such a faithful discharge of every duty, as to have enjoyment in the performance of it.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The various situations into which we are brought, are the appointments of him who ruleth over all. Let us, then, beware of counting any circumstance in our lot, either as unimportant or accidental, or view it as involving no responsibility. The great question for us, as new circumstances arise, is, how may I best glorify God? And although the very travail and toil wherewith we are engaged, are the sad fruits of our departure from God; yet, as our heavenly Father has mitigated the evils of the fall by many gifts, both providential and spiritual, let us receive them all with grateful hearts, nor allow even the sense of our unworthiness to spoil our relish of them. As we have a judge to deal with at last of strict impartiality, let us see to it that we strive after a faithful performance of what is due to God and man, having a conscience void of offence towards both; and to keep us humble, let us remember that the same earth which is to be the grave of the

brutes, is also to be ours, and that soon their dust will not be distinguishable from ours.

PRAYER.

O Lord, our heavenly Father, we draw near unto thee this morning, through the way of thine own appointment, the Lord Jesus Christ, and in dependence upon thy blessed Spirit. We thank thee for thy gracious protection of us during the past night, for the mercies of sleep, and rest, and refreshment, and that when we awake we are still with thee. While we are with thee as the objects of thy providential care, may we be with thee as the children of thy love in Jesus our Redeemer. We confess, O Lord, our melancholy and guilty alienation from thee, the only living and true God, and most bountiful Father, and that our iniquities are so great, as to deserve nothing at thy hand but wrath, and that for ever. Thou mightest justly leave us with all the requirements of thy law before us, but without any ability to perform them. But blessed be thy holy name, that, through our adorable Mediator, we may look for strength to discharge duty, as well as mercy to take away sin. Bestow on us, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy grace, whereby we may perform all the duties which thou mayest be pleased to lay upon us this day, faithfully, and in thy fear. May we count nothing too unimportant to make conscience of. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, may we do all to the glory of God. As events arise, may we feel as if we saw written upon them by the finger of God, Occupy till I come. May we weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice. May we let no opportunity pass, either of promoting the cause of Christ, or doing good to our fellow-creatures. And, O God, we pray, that while we have confidence in thy strength, we may also be quickened to the discharge of all duties, by the thought that we must one day appear in judgment, and that thy judgment is impartial, that thou wilt judge the righteous and the wicked. Let us, therefore, now judge ourselves, that we be not judged of thee. Grant, we beseech thee, that our condition, as dying creatures, may keep us in a state of continual humility, as without this, we cannot value our relation to thee, nor see our need of a Saviour, nor love thee with the love of those who owe all to grace. And grant also, that the difference thou hast made between us and the beasts that perish, inasmuch as thou hast bestowed on us an immortal soul, and above all given thy Son to die for us, may induce us to seek after a better portion hereafter, and live in this world as those who are the heirs of a bet-

venly inheritance. And all we ask, is in the name and for the sake of thy Son and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LXIV.

SCRIPTURE—2 COR. III.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Ver. 1—3. Those who exhibit, in their lives and conversations, the graces which the gospel recommends, give evidence that they have been taught by the Spirit of God, as well as rightly instructed by human teachers. Ver. 4, 5. Past success is a great encouragement to Christian ministers in their work; and whatever triumphs are obtained over Satan's kingdom, are owing to the power of the Lord. Ver. 6. The mere letter of the gospel kills, it is the Spirit which saves. Ver. 7—11. The gospel is greatly superior to the Mosaic dispensation. The latter told of the judgments of God against sin; the former tells of a method of obtaining righteousness before God. The Mosaic dispensation was preparatory, the gospel is the completion of that scheme which was begun under the law. Ver. 12, 13. The abolition of the shadowy rights of the ceremonial law, of which the vail on the face of Moses was a significant emblem, affords to the ministers of the truth, ability to speak the word of the Lord plainly, and the coming of Christ is the cause of this. Ver. 14—16. The Jews are still in darkness, but they will one day turn to Christ; and when this is done, the obscurity which now surrounds them will be dispersed. The perception of Christ in the Old Testament is essential to the right understanding of it, and thus read, it becomes the instrument of sanctifying the Lord's people, and rendering them like Christ.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The ministers of Christ have much cause for thankfulness, that the truth of the doctrines they preach is evidenced by the characters which are produced by their faithful proclamation of the gospel. What joy can equal his, who can look upon his flock, and say of many of them, 'ye are our epistles, known and read of all men?' It is a sure way by which a people may cheer and encourage the heart of their minister, when they are obviously making progress in the Christian life. At the same time, ministers will do well, both for their own comfort, and for success, to remember that the efficacy of their instructions is altogether dependent upon God. They have a dispensation to make known which far outshines that of which ancient Israel was accustomed to boast, for Christ has come and shed a meaning upon all that was obscure under the law. They who preach under this dispensation, should do so more zealously, and spiritually, and plainly, than was done in ancient times. Instead of leading their people to hear the thunders of Sinai, which spoke threatenings to the hearts of sinners, they can lead

them to mount Zion, from which issues the gentle invitation of that meek and lowly one who speaks peace to those whom law terrors have alarmed. While we enjoy the blessedness of beholding the revelation of God in its true meaning, which is Christ, the object of type and prophecy, let us lift up our hearts in prayer, and beseech God, that he would hasten the promised time when the vail which now obscures their ancient scriptures to the Jews will be removed, and they will receive Jesus as their long expected Messiah. And let us so study the character of Christ, and so dwell upon his perfections, that we may become like him, in the way, and as far as the members of Christ's body may resemble their divine Head.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we bless thee as the God of salvation and the source of consolation in Jesus Christ. There is no God but thyself, and thou art glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, ever doing wonders. We thank thee that thou hast manifested thy character in thy word, and law, and made thy glory to be exhibited to man in the face of thy Son Jesus Christ. In him we behold God manifest in the flesh. And we thank thee that thy people show, by the holy lives they live, that thou art working effectually in them. As we, O Lord, have been created in the likeness of the first Adam, may we be born again in the image of the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. May all our iniquities be blotted out through his perfect atonement. May all our means of grace, the word, sacraments, and the preaching of the gospel, be made efficacious in our experience by thine own Spirit. May our eyes be opened to the full glory of the gospel, so that we may see in it an excellency far exceeding that by which the Old Testament dispensation was distinguished. May we feel that we are without excuse and have no way of escape, if we neglect so great salvation. God forbid, that such a vail should be upon our hearts, as that which now hides, from thine ancient people, the glory of the gospel. Lord, remove that vail from them, and all blindness to thy truth from us. May Jesus be formed in us, the only hope of glory. May the reading of thy word, and the contemplation of the excellency of Jesus, be blessed by thy divine Spirit, so that the image of Christ may be distinctly impressed on our souls, and his example followed in our lives. For his sake, heal all our backslidings, receive us graciously, and love us freely. Pardon especially the sins of this day, which we have been allowed to spend. Accept our thanksgivings for all the mercies we have enjoyed during its continuance. Be with us to protect us through

the night, and raise us up to the duties of another day. Bless our friends, and relations, and benefactors, and enemies. Be gracious to the poor, the afflicted in body and spirit, the bereaved, and the dying. Prepare us for death, and for meeting thee in judgment. And unto thee, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be everlasting praise. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE V.

SCRIPTURE—ECCLESIASTES IV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Wherever we turn our eye we behold the weak made the prey of the strong. This is as true as in the days of the Preacher, and will continue to exist as long as the evil heart dwells in man, and as long as man has power. So great is the tyranny exercised in the world, that while he beholds it, the man of God will conclude the dead to be in a more desirable condition than the living. Sin is the cause; and the grace of God only can bring men who are naturally untender and despotic to put on bowels of mercies.

Envy is another of the manifestations of the heart of sin, which makes us grudge and grieve any good which shall fall to the lot of our neighbour. The fruit of the Spirit, on the other hand, is love. They who are successful in any department must submit to be envied. But we shall not improve our condition, if, in attempting to escape the envy arising from success, we consign ourselves to inactivity. There is a lust of acquiring, not for the sake of others who are to come after us, not for the gratification of our own comfort, but for mere covetousness, which may well be called, as in the passage before us, 'Vanity, yea, sore travail.' There is much benefit from those social connections which men are naturally disposed to form; they aid in the way of support, and comfort, and defence.

When men look about for a station insuring happiness, they are apt to look to the station of a king, possessing, as it does, power, and more than a common share of wealth; but it has its anxieties and cares. The subject, even the poorest, by a change may become more prosperous—out of prison he may come to reign. But while the king cannot rise higher, he may be reduced to poverty.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

It need not be to us a matter of surprise when we behold the acts of oppressors. These have been witnessed since the world began. The bible alone can afford us a correct explanation of how it is that man should so cruelly lord it over his brother. Let us be thankful when we reflect that the same record which proclaims the cause of this, also exhibits the only remedy for it, which is, fleeing to God as our protector. Let us all seek to be distinguished by a different spirit, created in us by the gospel, which will

lead us to do to others as we would have others to do to us.

Those who are successful in their honest calling may expect that they shall not enjoy their prosperity without envy. But a disposition to share their success with others, which is just the law of Christ, will tend to allay the malignant feelings even of the most depraved; but it is recklessness, and not wisdom, to choose idleness in the hope thereby of escaping all evils along with the evil of envy. There are many necessary consequences of a baneful kind which accompany indolence.

It ought to be a Christian's endeavour to beware of that debasing and irrational appetite, so often condemned in the word of God, the love of money for its own sake. Before this the finest appearances in character are destroyed; and many a one, who has begun well in the Christian life, has been shrunk up and become an offence instead of an ornament to the cause of the Redeemer. 'For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.'

The social life, which is an arrangement in providence, and which is accommodated to our natural constitution, ought to be acknowledged by us as a matter of gratitude. He who made us, gives us for our comfort parents, brethren, and sisters, partners, children, and friends. It ought to be felt as an argument for contentment, on the part of those who are humble in their circumstances, that cares multiply in proportion to the loftiness of a man's station.

PRAYER.

We desire this morning, O our God, to approach thee through the only way whereby sinners may come to thee, thine own dearly beloved and only begotten Son. Thou hast given us quiet rest, and when we awoke thy hand sustained us. At the beginning of another day we seek together, as a family, thy blessing and grace. Keep us, O our Father, through this day, from all evil to our bodies, and, above all, from the contamination of sin. We avow ourselves the children of a holy God, and the sincere disciples of the holy Jesus. O may we spend this day in accordance with this honourable connection, this solemn profession. If thou art pleased this day to give us the exercise of authority, enable us to act with tenderness and Christian discretion. If we are subject to reproach or oppression, give us, O Lord, the spirit of meekness and submission, that we may thus adorn the doctrine of our Lord. Enable us to rejoice in our neighbour's prosperity, instead of envying him, as we will do if left to our own natural tendencies. Make us not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Preserve us from making the world our God. Let us not trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who is the soul's only sure, and abiding, and everlasting

portion, and who has made himself over unto his people graciously in covenant by Jesus Christ. Accept of our united thanks in that thou hast set us together as a family, making us, in this manner, mutual helps, and comforts, and defences to each other. May each of us discharge the duty which is assigned us by thee, as in thy sight. May we exercise a spirit of contentment and submission to thee, in respect to the station thou hast assigned us in life. Bring us together, if it be thy will, at the close of this day, in peace and safety. May the Spirit himself dwell in us, and keep us from evil. And unto thee the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be praise everlasting. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLII.

SCRIPTURE—2 COR. IV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The work of the ministry is laborious and difficult, so that men are apt to faint under it. But it is a mighty encouragement under all discomfitures, that the servant of God feels, as Paul did, that it is the truth he proclaims, and that he has no secular end to serve by what he preaches.

As one may be prevented, by a veil being thrown over him, seeing the beauties of creation; so unbelievers are hindered seeing the excellency of the gospel by the circumstance, that their eyes are blinded, their intellects are obscured, so that they perceive not the superlative excellency of the gospel, by the suares of the great enemy of souls. There is a transcendent beauty in the gospel, but men cannot see it so long as satan blinds them. The unbeliever who boasts of his freedom from the weakness of believing the gospel, should be an object of real pity to the follower of Christ, who knows the cause of his unbelief. Ministers, and even apostles, are no more than what God has made them, vessels of earth holding inestimable riches, which God has placed in them. They judge falsely of the Christian life who conclude from its trials that it is an unhappy one. Its trials are all purifying, perfecting, and therefore, to souls who view purification as the real end of being, means of blessing. In committing his truth to men, as the preachers of it, the Lord has had regard to his church; and although the heralds of the truth are made to suffer by their faithful proclamation of the gospel, yet they too are sustained by the rich rewards and promises made to them by their Master.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

While those who hear the gospel should sympathize, and feel for, and strive to support, the hearts of Christ's servants, whose office, in its arduous duties, renders them liable to faint, they also should seek to commend the truth to every man's conscience, by making it evident that they are dis-

interested in their aim. The ministers of the gospel should not allow themselves to be swallowed up with over much sorrow, when their labours have not been attended with the success they could have wished, and which they hoped for. Some of those at whose long obduracy they may be wondering, are judicially blinded by the power of the great enemy. The cause of their refusing Christ may lie neither in the obscurity of the gospel, nor in the defects of the Christian minister, although both of these may be blamed for it.

It is well when the servant of the Lord is impressed with the same feeling of his nothingness as Paul here manifests, testifying that he is nothing of himself, and acknowledging that the work is committed to him not to lift up the creature, but more gloriously to make it evident that it is the Lord's, by the contrast between the imperfection of the vessel and the excellency of its contents. Well is it for those, whether they be ministers or private Christians, who, out of all trials and afflictions, can extract benefit, and can thus glory in tribulation. A matter of thankfulness it is, too, when, labouring as they do for the honour of Christ and the good of his church, they are content to wait for their reward in that exceeding and eternal weight of glory which the Lord has promised to those that are faithful.

PRAYER.

Ever blessed Lord God, we thank thee at the close of another day for the mercy which has watched over us during its continuance. Thou art the preserver of men. Wherever we are, we are in thy keeping; and wert thou for a moment to withdraw thy protection, we immediately perish. And while it is so with our bodies, it is equally so with our immortal spirits. Thou impartest spiritual being, and thou keepest it alive in thy gracious love. We praise thy name for the provision thou hast made for our souls in thy word, for the spiritual manna, and the refreshing streams which are contained therein, and for the blessing we enjoy in the preaching of the gospel. O Lord, increase the number of faithful ministers of the truth in our own land, and throughout the world. Make those who are labouring in the word eminently successful. By thine own effectual grace sustain their drooping hearts. May we esteem them very highly for their work, and their Master's sake. By the success thou givest them in their work, make it apparent to all that the excellency is of thee; therefore, O Lord, shed down the influences of the Spirit upon them and their ministrations. May many, through the operation of the Spirit, be pricked in their hearts, and led to ask what they should do to be saved. As thy people, grant to us that we may grow in knowledge of the gospel, and in admiration of its excellency and suitableness to our necessities. Be pleased, O God, to take care of us through the ensuing night. Be thou with us

during its silent watches. We commit ourselves to thee, our Father in Christ Jesus. We pray thee to blot out all our transgressions, more especially those of the day now past. And unto thy name in Christ we ascribe praise everlasting. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—ECCLESIASTES V.

REMARKS.

This chapter may be divided into four successive parts. The first extends to the seventh verse, and relates to public and private worship. Amidst the losses, afflictions, and manifold vicissitudes of life, which, in the previous chapters, the sacred writer has so pathetically and vividly described, the soul of the believer seeks and finds a glorious retreat in public and private fellowship with God. In the 'dry and thirsty land' he betakes himself to the Fountain of living waters. But even into the noble and enrapturing pursuits of piety, the 'vanity' of sin and folly may intrude; and he who professes to worship God may be but rendering 'the sacrifice of fools.' Against these evils this passage is a solemn and authoritative warning; and O let the wise, and kind, and monitory call be meekly and thankfully received. Let us 'keep our foot when we go to the house of God.' It is the house of Him before whose presence angels 'veil their faces with their wings'; therefore, 'put off thy shoes'—in lowly reverence adore. It is the house of prayer; sincerely, earnestly, believably, invoke God's grace, and 'bring no more vain oblations.' It is the house of Christian doctrine; be 'ready to hear,' and having heard, go, study to obey. Nor let us omit the sacrifice of praise, and, if circumstances call for it, the free-will offering of the vow. But if we vow, let prudence, as well as honesty, accompany the act; and having given the sacred pledge, let us also yield the promised offering. How sad if, in this respect, we should 'suffer our mouth to cause our flesh to sin!' How sad if what we call our praises and our prayers should be but 'divers vanities,' a 'multitude of dreams!' How sad if God should 'be angry at our voice, and destroy the work of our hands!'

The second great division of the chapter consists of the eighth verse. It seems to be but little connected either with the previous or with the succeeding context; but may have been suggested by the exhortation at the close of the seventh verse—'fear thou God.' It briefly, but vividly, describes a state of things in which government commits outrage on itself, and defeats the very end for which it is ordained—in which justice is violently perverted, and the poor are cruelly oppressed. Yet 'marvel not,' says the sacred writer, 'at the matter;' and by the consideration which he adduces to enforce the counsel, he virtually cries to the cruel and unjust them-

selves, whether in private or official place, Beware. And what is that consideration? 'He that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they.' O yes, there is another government than that of man; and 'What mean ye, saith the Lord of hosts, that ye beat my people in pieces, and grind the faces of the poor?'

The third division extends from the ninth to the seventeenth verse, and relates to the insufficiency of earthly riches, and the destitution of the wealthy worldling. In this passage the sacred writer develops the five following principles: 1. That the most important of man's physical wants are easily supplied; and that, in respect of these, the monarch is dependent on the very commodities by which the poor man is sustained, ver. 9. 2. That to him who makes earthly property his portion, ' vexation of spirit' accompanies both the pursuit and the possession of that on which he so sinfully sets his heart, ver. 10. 3. That as wealth requires a corresponding number of dependents, by these the rich man's resources are drained, and, it may be, his mind is fretted and annoyed, ver. 11. 4. That whereas, by the want of care, and even by the labour which poverty demands, the man of humble station and industrious habits secures sweet and refreshing sleep, the rich man's slumbers are apt to be broken and disturbed by the anxiety and fear which his very abundance may produce, ver. 12. 5. That men are apt to be injured by the very wealth for which they are so often envied, ver. 13. 6. That a man may lose his riches even before he goes down into the grave, and that into the eternal world he cannot carry them along with him, ver. 14—17. What monitory views are these! Let not the poor man murmur at his lot. Let not the rich man glory in his wealth. Ours be the 'treasure in the heavens;' ours the inheritance of God.

In the three remaining verses of the chapter, the sacred writer shows how happiness may be derived even from temporal and earthly blessings. In the previous part of the book he represents them as utterly inadequate to meet the necessities of man, considered as a moral and immortal being, and as often failing to supply and satisfy even his natural and ordinary wants. But he does not regard them with a cynic's frown, or with a hermit's scorn. He acknowledges them to be gifts of God; and declares that, in the temperate and religious use of them, much personal and social comfort may be enjoyed. Wherefore, let us 'use the world as not abusing it;' and while we 'take our portion and rejoice in our labour,' let us pause, and bethink ourselves, 'this is the gift of God.'

PRAYER.

Eternal and most glorious Jehovah, show us what thou art, and what we are, that we may worship reverently before thee. Thou art greatly to be praised, and thy greatness is unsearchable. But not for thy power, and holiness, and terrible majesty alone are we called to magnify thy name. For how great is thy goodness! how constant is thy care! how countless are thy

benefits! For temporal provision, and for power to eat thereof; for peace by day, and for sleep by night; for all thy common mercies, we would praise thee. But O convince us that we need a nobler heritage; and make us thankful, that for man's degenerate nature salvation has been purchased and wrought out by the mediation of thy Son. On that salvation may we all lay hold, and experimentally find it to meet the amplest capacities and the deepest wants of our immortal souls. Though by nature dead in trespasses and sins, may we be made alive unto thee. Though by nature heirs of hell, may we be begotten to a lively hope—to an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. United together by the bonds of nature and society, may we also be fellow-heirs of the grace of life. We kneel together before thee here; O may we all enjoy thine endless fellowship hereafter. Meanwhile, may we diligently and devoutly attend on the public and private means of grace. May we wait at wisdom's gates; may we watch at the posts of her doors. May we keep our foot when we go to the house of God. With willing ear may we listen to thy word, and receive with meekness its authoritative truths. With earnest prayer may we ask thy pardoning, sanctifying, and consoling mercy. And O withhold not that mercy from our souls. Answer us in the joy of our hearts. Even now refresh us with thy grace. Dispose us, in entering on the business of another day, to aim at the promotion of thy cause; and grant that the events which shall this day befall us may conduce to the spiritual improvement of our souls. Let not the love of money, nor any sinful disposition, hold dominion over us. May we remember that thou, O Higher than the highest, lookest into our very hearts; and may the thought of that eternity to which time is carrying us away, make us habitually serious and devout. Pardon our sins, sanctify our souls, and answer in mercy these our unworthy prayers, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—2 COR. v.

REMARKS.

What a glorious succession, what a rich variety of practical and consolatory views does this chapter comprehend! These views, however, may be classified under five particulars. 1. The apostle describes the hopes and desires of believers after future

glory, ver. 1—8. But yet, to be an 'unclothed' spirit seems alien to the feelings of his heart, and he clings to the idea of being 'clothed on with a heavenly house.' O glorious prospect! majestic destiny! Yet to the Christian believer, how poor, how mean, how unnoticed soever he may be, that prospect, this destiny pertains. For the soul to rest in paradise, for the body to rise in glory, and for soul and body, linked together in holy harmony, to rejoice throughout eternity in fellowship with God, is a privilege which belongs to every one who 'falls asleep in Christ.'

2. The apostle exhibits the judgment-seat of Christ, ver. 10. 'Before it,' says he, 'we must all appear, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.' Yes, we must *all* be there; we must all *appear*; we must all be judged. But O the momentous alternative! Ours, in the day of doom, be the sentence which shall open the gates of heaven; and ours let it be to choose now as it may be supposed that we shall wish to have chosen then.

3. The apostle describes that mediatorial work of Christ by which provision has been made for the believer's acquittal at the judgment-seat, and enjoyment of the endless happiness of heaven, ver. 14, 15, 18, 19, 21. And here it is explicitly declared, that the mission and mediation of Christ are traceable to God; that Christ, as a substitute for sinners, bore the transgressions of such as should believe upon his name; and that, from his atoning death and mediatorial grace, both reconciliation and sanctification flow. Precious truths! In that heavenly glory, and in that awful judgment-seat, which in this chapter the apostle so vividly describes, let us trace the value of the Saviour's sacrifice. Except for his character of Saviour, how fearful to meet him as a Judge! And what were heaven to the believer except for an interest in him!

4. St Paul indicates the influence which the truths now enumerated had in his own case and that of Timothy, and may be expected to have in the case of all who really believe them, ver. 9, 11, 14, 20, 21. 'We labour,' says he, 'that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him;' 'Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men;' 'For the love of Christ constraineth us;' 'Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ,' &c. By the truths referred to, then, St Paul and his companion were prompted to seek salvation for themselves, to urge salvation on others, and to labour for the promotion of the Saviour's cause. Are we thus constrained? Do we thus exert ourselves? The cross, the judgment-seat, heaven, hell, eternity—these are no empty names, no idle dreams, no antiquated fables. Each is a reality, and to each of *us* that reality solemnly appeals. O let us act according to the truth of things, according to the verities of God. We must stand before the judgment-seat—shall we be heedless of our souls? Heaven may be attained—shall we recklessly reject it? Christ has died—shall we set his sacrifice at nought? Sinners are perishing—shall we look idly on?

5. The apostle defines the character and condition of true Christians, by representing them as *recon-*

ciled to God, and as new creatures; attributing both parts of the attainment to the agency of God, ver. 5, 17—20. Let us not deceive ourselves by supposing that we are the children of God and the heirs of heaven, if our persons remain unjustified, and our moral natures unrenewed. But why should we not be justified? Why should we not be renewed? O why should we not be saved?

PRAYER.

O Lord God, whose message the gospel, and whose gift salvation is, impress upon our minds the precious truths contained in that portion of thy word which has been now read. May they prove profitable to us for doctrine and reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness. We have heard of the judgment-seat of Christ as a scene of terror and dismay; but, thanks be to thy name, we have also heard of an atoning Saviour, and of an incorruptible inheritance. In that Saviour may we all believe—of that inheritance may we all be heirs. If our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, may we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. In life may we have a good hope through grace of a happier life to come. By the gate of death may we enter into paradise. At the resurrection-day may our bodies be raised in glory. At the judgment-seat of Christ may we be accepted of him. Throughout eternity may we be glad with the joy of the redeemed. Grant, Father of mercies, that even now, in the believing contemplation of Jesus Christ, in the experience of thy saving grace, and in the anticipation of the glory yet to be revealed, our hearts may be comforted and cheered. But while we rejoice in thy salvation, may we also labour in thy cause. To our own souls may we give earnest heed; and may we seek the salvation of all to whom our influence can reach. May the spiritual condition of the world arouse us. May the love of Christ constrain us. May the Holy Ghost assist and prosper us. God of mercy, have mercy on the world. May it become as a field which the Lord hath blessed. Give thy ministers great success. May thy church be edified. May many souls be saved. Regard with kindness all more especially related to ourselves. Do them good in thy good pleasure. From the youngest to the oldest, from the richest to the poorest of them all, peace be on them and mercy. Accept of our thanks for thy great kindness towards us in the course of this day. Follow its events with thy blessing, and pardon its innumerable sins. Grant us refreshing sleep this night. Raise us up, if it be thy will, to-morrow morning; and give us grace to devote our continued lives to thy holy ser-

vice. Answer our prayers in peace, O God, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXL.

SCRIPTURE—ECCLESIASTES VI. VII.

REMARKS.

The former of these two chapters, in its style of thought and description, greatly resembles that which immediately precedes it. The picture presented in the two first verses, however, affords a strong contrast to that with which the fifth chapter concludes. The case represented here is that of one 'to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth; but to whom he giveth not power to eat thereof.' This description corresponds, in a great degree, to the *miser's* wretched and dishonourable life; but its terms are still more applicable to cases in which, how strong soever a man's wish to use and enjoy his property may be, personal sickness, domestic bereavement, or the prospect of death, renders wealth, and power, and honour unable to afford an hour's enjoyment to his heart. In ver. 3—6, a similar picture is presented. The man described is supposed to be the father of many children, and to have his life protracted for 'many years.' But 'his soul is not filled with good'—he enjoys not the worldly blessings he possesses; and at the last, from his own misconduct, or from gross ingratitude, he dies unhonoured. More to be desired, than such a lot, it is declared, is that of the 'untimely birth,' which 'cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness.' From these sketches of specific cases, the sacred writer proceeds to a representation of human life in general, considered without reference to true religion, ver. 7—12. It is described as a life of labour and affliction—as vain and shadow-like. And, 'who knoweth,' it is asked, 'what is good for a man therein?' Apart from revelation and religion, man is left in ignorance and uncertainty, with respect both to the physical and the moral department of the subject. But the question has been answered, what is good for man? yea, God himself has answered it. In one view, life is vanity; but, as associated with eternity, it is mighty and momentous. 'Vexation of spirit' characterizes man's residence on earth; but there are principles provided by the grace of God, and pressed on the acceptance of the sinner, by which that disquietude may be in a great degree neutralized and overborne—by which life may be not only consecrated to a noble end, but fraught with a majestic happiness.

In the seventh chapter, Solomon prescribes a great variety of practical principles and rules. In its miscellaneous character, it resembles a chapter in the book of Proverbs. The sacred writer sets forth, 1. The plenteousness and value of a good name; both of which ideas may be comprehended in the comparison between it and 'precious ointment,' ver. 1. 2.

The superiority of death to birth considered, the one as an entrance on, the other as a departure from, the miseries of life, ver. 1. 3. The wisdom and advantage of going rather 'to the house of mourning,' than 'to the house of feasting,'—declaring, on the one hand, that 'by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better,' i. e. that scenes of affliction are fitted to press upon the mind very salutary views and feelings in regard to moral evil, one's own death, the eternity that follows, and the wants and claims of others; and on the other hand, that 'as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool,' i. e. that idle and vicious merriment, like the blaze of thorns applied to the domestic purpose specified, is noisy and tumultuous, indeed, but notwithstanding, inefficient and transitory, ver. 2—6. 4. The evil of oppression, bribery, impatience, pride, irritability, persevering anger, and discontent, ver. 7—10. 5. The excellence of wisdom and knowledge, ver. 11, 12. 6. The duty of exercising dispositions corresponding to the respective situations and circumstances in which one may be placed by Providence, ver. 13, 14. 7. The danger of being, as Solomon expresses it, either 'righteous overmuch,' or 'overmuch wicked,' a subject on which it may be proper to state, that, inasmuch as a man cannot be too righteous, in the sense of *holy*, and ought never in the least to be wicked, in the sense of *unbelieving and immoral*, the sacred writer is here to be regarded as either speaking ironically, or denoting by the expression 'righteous overmuch,' *extreme rigidity, and intemperate zeal*, ver. 15—19. 8. The sinfulness of human nature, ver. 20. 9. The impropriety of a person being jealous and suspicious in regard to what is said of him by others, ver. 21, 22. 10. The danger and prevalence of female wickedness; the strong comparative terms employed by Solomon on which subject were probably occasioned by his own experience in regard to his concubines. What a host of practical principles is here! Let us shun the sins denounced. Let us cherish the virtues urged. By consistent and persevering holiness, life is ennobled, and man is blessed; and often, by the considerate, humble, patient, kind, and zealous believer, even 'the house of mourning' has been found to be 'the gate of heaven.'

PRAYER.

Great and merciful Jehovah, hear us graciously, when we now present before thee the offering of our prayers and praises; and do thou thyself enable us to worship thee aright. We acknowledge thee as the only living and true God; as the infinitely perfect One. Nor, in the celebration of thy praises, would we be unmindful of thine encouraging attribute of love. Truly thou hast commended it towards men—thou hast commended it towards us. We deserve not a cup of cold water at thy hand; and it is a remarkable manifestation of thy mercy and forbearance, that we are not consumed. And yet we are here before thee on the morning of another day, in the continued possession, not

only of many common comforts, both personal and social, but also of many inestimably precious, religious privileges. O may we taste and see that thou art gracious, by accepting of those spiritual and everlasting blessings which thou art so ready to bestow. May we enjoy a better portion than the world can give. May we have thee for our reconciled Father, and heaven for our secured inheritance. And so, amidst all the losses, afflictions, and changes of life, may we know, in our own souls, that in heaven we have an enduring substance, and that all things work together for our good. Revive and gladden our hearts, O God, with thine exceeding great and precious promises. Enable us also, while we enjoy the comforts, to perform the duties, of the Christian life. For this purpose may thy word, as now read, be profitable to those who heard it. This day, and in the habitual course and tenor of our lives, may we exercise and cherish the virtues thus recommended and enforced. May we willingly enter the house of mourning, to comfort the heavy heart, and to receive useful lessons for our own souls. While, in the faith of Christ, the good hope of heaven, and the participation of thy common benefits, we find devout and holy satisfaction, may we, nevertheless, avoid the laughter of the fool. May we do good, as we have opportunity, to all men; yea, even like thee, O heavenly Father, to the unthankful and evil. May we be humble, patient, merciful, and meek. In the events that befall us, may we recognize thy hand; and by the discipline of providence, and the lessons of inspired truth, accompanied by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, may we become wiser and better the longer we live. Regard, with great kindness, our relatives and friends. Over them be thy benignant eye, and underneath them thine everlasting arms. Bless our sovereign, and all in authority over us—our church, and her pastors; and our native land. Send thy gospel forth throughout the world. Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee. Answer us, we beseech thee, in peace and mercy, through the mediation of thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—2 COR. VI.

REMARKS.

The first thirteen verses of this chapter describe the ministry of Paul and Timothy, who, in this epistle, as in their personal travels, stand associated

together. It is specified, 1. That the apostle and his companion, taking advantage of the opportunity which 'the accepted time,' 'the day of salvation,' afforded, urged on the Corinthians the claims of Christian faith and piety, ver. 1, 2. 2. That, in the performance of their ministerial work, they were involved in many varieties of suffering and distress, ver. 4, 5, 8. 3. That, supported and guided by the Holy Ghost, they conducted themselves with circumspection, intelligence, forbearance, benignity, and affection, ver. 3, 6, 7. And, 4. That though, in one sense, sorrowful, they were happy notwithstanding, and though, in one sense, poor and destitute, they yet themselves were rich, and made many rich besides, ver. 8—13. In the five remaining verses of the chapter, St Paul cautions the Corinthians against intermarrying, or being otherwise 'unequally yoked,' with unbelievers; enforcing the precept by showing, 1. That there could not be a safe and satisfactory communion between persons who were mutually so widely dissevered, and so decidedly opposed, ver. 14—16; and, 2. That God had promised to be a Father to such as renounced the fellowship of sinners, and the practice of sin, ver. 17, 18. Although so large a portion of the chapter is occupied with the experience and conduct of Paul and Timothy as ministers of Christ, it may suggest to persons in private station some practical and useful lessons. While our passing life remains, let us diligently use it as an 'accepted time,' as a 'day of salvation.' Ours be the faith and hope which cheered the hearts of Paul and Timothy amidst all the labours and afflictions of their ministry, so that, even if placed in like circumstances of peril and distress, we may experience like enjoyment. Ours be the 'purity,' the 'knowledge,' the 'long-suffering,' the 'kindness,' the 'patience,' by which they practically showed what Christianity can do. Ours be the 'treasure in the heavens;' and ours the strenuous attempt to 'make many rich'—rich in soul, rich for eternity. Let us meet the personal kindness, and the authoritative message of our ministers with gratitude, and faith, and practical obedience. Let us shrink from sin, though it assume the guise of 'an angel of light;' and avoid such fellowship with wicked men, as is inconsistent alike with the credit of Christianity, and with our own spiritual safety. And having become the children of God, and the heirs of glory, let us in all things act accordingly—thankful for our Father's kindness, obedient to our Father's will, and happy in our Father's fellowship.

PRAYER.

Hearken to the voice of our cry, our King and our God—for unto thee will we pray. We deserve no blessing at thy hand. Our sins are many, and our unworthiness is great. But thou hast invited us, and Christ has died. For his sake hear the prayers in which we now invoke thy blessing on our souls. That blessing O do thou graciously bestow. Justified by faith, may we have peace with thee. May thy Holy Spirit help our infirmities, and lead us in the way everlasting. Strong in his strength, and wise in his

wisdom, may we resist temptation, avoid sin, and perfect holiness in thy fear. Lead us, O Lord, in thy righteousness; make thy way straight before our face. Grant also, that, in our own experience, we may find that wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and that godliness, with contentment, is great gain. Even if severe affliction should assail us—cleaving to thee, may we feel a holy joy. Be thou our strong habitation, to which we may continually resort. And grant that, experiencing thy saving grace ourselves, we may also seek to do good to the souls of others. May we instruct the ignorant, console the sorrowful, admonish the careless, and hold sacred fellowship with thy believing servants. May we labour to promote thy kingdom and thy cause; and may we be honoured instruments of doing so. Establish upon us the work of our hands, and bless our unworthy efforts to the salvation of immortal souls. May one generation praise thy works to another, and declare thy mighty acts. May men abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and sing of thy righteousness. Bless thy church. Build up her waste places—repair her desolations. Promote within her the cause of purity and peace. May her members be active in thy service, and importunate in prayer. Have respect unto the covenant, and regard in mercy the dark places of the earth. Infuse the meekness and gentleness of Christ into the habitations of cruelty. Tell the world that there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man; and let all flesh bless thy holy name for ever and ever. Defend and refresh us during the darkness and silence of another night. Watch over us for good, and not for evil. Hide thy face from the sins we have committed against thee in the course of this day. Command thy loving-kindness on our souls. And if thou art pleased to raise us up to the light and business of to-morrow, grant that we may commence it with thy praise, and spend it in thy fear. For Christ's sake, hear our prayers; and to him, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be glory and honour for ever and ever. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XC. 11.

SCRIPTURE—ECCLESIASTES VIII.

REMARKS.

This chapter begins with a general commendation of wisdom or true religion, and then goes on to show how it should influence our conduct. It will lead a

man to obey the civil rulers of the country in which he lives, ver. 2—5; and that as Paul says not only for wrath, but for conscience sake; and much more surely will it teach us to obey him, who is supreme ruler over all. From the 6th to the 8th verse we are exhorted to prepare for the events of life, and especially for our last great change. Truly the misery of man is often great upon him, because he is not ready for the hour of dissolution. That last event in our earthly history, though the time of it, as fixed by him, in whose hand is the length of our days, is to us altogether uncertain in its approach. We must all die, and there is no discharge in that war. When the hour comes, we cannot delay a moment: for no man hath power over the Spirit to retain the Spirit. Wicked men, meanwhile, may live as if they thought they could live for ever, but wickedness shall not deliver those, who are given to it, from death. O that we were wise, that we understood these things, that we would consider our latter end. From the 9th to the 13th verse we have an account of wicked rulers, and are shown how at last all shall receive their due reward. Men often rule to their own hurt, being miserable in this world, and, by the indulgence of their passions, treasuring up wrath for the next. How vain is all their dignity! In a little while they are buried, and soon forgotten in the city where they ruled. They are unmindful, however, of their end, and because in the meantime they are allowed to go on with impunity, they are emboldened in sin. This, indeed, is the case with all ungodly sinners. The long-suffering of God hardens them, instead of leading them to repentance. How foolish is such conduct! However long the righteous retribution may be delayed, yet, surely we know that in the end it shall be well with them that fear God, but it shall not be well with the wicked. From the 14th verse to the end of the chapter, we see how we ought to regard the mysteries of providence. Here below, we often see the righteous in calamity, while the wicked prosper like a green bay tree. This shows the vanity of the world, and raises our thoughts to a future state, where rewards and punishments shall be equally dispensed. Let us all be contented with our own lot, and adore God whose judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, how precious are thy thoughts towards us! How great is the sum of them! If we should count them they are more in number than the sand. When we awake we are still with thee. We have laid ourselves down to sleep, and we have awaked again this morning, because thou hast sustained us. Blessed be thy name for all thy goodness—for preserving us in life—for raising us up in health and comfort, and allowing us to read thy word, and surround thy throne of grace. O Lord, bless to us that portion of thy word we have now read together, and teach, by thy Spirit, to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wis-

dom. When we read in thy word of the uncertainty of life and the certainty of death, O may the Holy Spirit bring these truths home with power to our hearts, and teach us to know our end, and the measure of our days, how short it is. Each day we rise may we remember that it may be our last, and help us to improve it in preparing for eternity. O may we count that the long-suffering of God is salvation, and may we have grace to be up and doing while it is day. Holy Father, we thank thee that, while we are reminded of our fleeting existence here, thou hast made known to us that work of Jesus, by which death hath been abolished. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. We rejoice that Christ hath purchased the heavenly inheritance for his people by the shedding of his own blood, and that, as their Head and elder Brother, he hath taken possession in their name. Accept of us, O Lord, in the Beloved. May we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of all our sins, according to the riches of thy grace. We have sinned grievously against thee, and if thou wert to deal with us according to our deservings, thou wouldest swear in thy wrath that we shall never enter into thy rest. But we beseech thee, O Lord, to have mercy upon us for Jesus' sake, that we may receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. And we entreat of thee, O Lord, that, since thou hast told us of a better and more enduring substance, we may be enabled, by divine grace, to live more under the power of the world that is to come. Help us to live as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. May we never look on any thing in the world as our portion, but as pilgrims and sojourners, may we be always passing through it on our way to heaven, feeling thankful for all comforts we receive by the way; but ever looking for our home in our Father's house above. May we no more be conformed to the world; but being transformed in the renewing of our minds, may we set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth on thy right hand. Quicken us, O Lord, by thy Holy Spirit, and raise us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Sanctify us more and more every day, and make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Bless and protect us, O Lord, through this day. Keep us in thy fear, and whatsoever we do in word or deed, may we do all in the name of the Lord Jesus

Christ. Bless our dear friends we pray thee, and prepare them also for a place in thy kingdom. Remember in great mercy the sons and daughters of affliction, and sanctify to them all their trials. Arise, O Lord, and plead thine own cause. Let thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Dwell, O Lord, in our hearts, and enable us to abide in Jesus by faith, and walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Hear us, O Lord our God, and accept of us: for all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVI. 7.

SCRIPTURE—2 COR. VII.

REMARKS.

The first verse of this chapter should have belonged more properly to the preceding one. Having spoken of believers as the temple of God, and as the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, Paul here exhorts them to act worthy of such a high and holy relationship. It becomes the children of God to be dead unto sin, and alive unto holiness. While we call God Father, let us strive to be holy. At the second verse he claims due respect for the ministers of the gospel. Many false teachers had risen up in the church at Corinth, and had been doing all in their power to depreciate the character of Paul. Paul vindicates himself in both his epistles, and here he appeals to them as to his integrity, declaring that he had never injured them in any thing. He deals with them in much tenderness, and declares his affection for them to be so strong, that if it were consistent with his duty as an apostle, he could cheerfully both live and die with them. He then mentions the joy he felt in all his tribulations, when he thought of his spiritual children at Corinth. In his first epistle he had reproved them sharply for their sins, and among other things enjoined them to excommunicate a person who had brought scandal on their Christian profession. He had sent Titus also to teach the same things by word of mouth. And here he refers to the matter again, and assures them how refreshing it was, amid all his trials, to hear of the favourable change that had taken place at Corinth. He was cheered by the very sight of his beloved brother Titus, but still more so when he heard the good tidings about the mourning Corinthians. He declares that he did not repent of having written to them the former epistle, though at the time he had felt very sorrowful, at being obliged to reprove them so severely. Now he expresses himself glad, not that he had grieved them with his reproofs, but because these had led to their sorrowing after a godly sort. And after having thus expressed his joy at the report he had heard of their state, he assures them that he wrote his first epistle, not so much on account of the person who had offended, as to show to the whole church his care for them in

the sight of God. And then he closes the chapter by again repeating how much he had been refreshed and comforted, and assuring them that he was not ashamed of them, but had confidence in them in all things. Let us all seek to have such views of sin as are here described, regarding it as that abominable thing which God hates, and on account of which our Saviour died. Let us look for mercy through Jesus, and let us study to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and to show that carefulness, and indignation, and fear, and zeal, and vehement desire, which Paul approves so much in the Corinthians.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, we appear before thee self-condemned: for behold we are vile and what can we answer? But we hope in thy mercy through Jesus Christ. Verily it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom we are the chief. O Lord, if thou dost mark iniquities against us we cannot stand. O deal not with us according to our merits, but according to thy great mercy in Christ Jesus. O let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, on the Son of man, whom thou hast made strong for thyself. We would plead the merits of Jesus our Saviour, and thine own promise to us in him, saying, I will remember your sins no more. O blot out all our transgressions, and be well-pleased with us for the sake of him whom thou hearest always, and in whom thou art ever well-pleased. We beseech thee, O Lord, that thou wouldest increase our faith, and enable us to commit our souls to Jesus, that we may be washed in his blood, and clothed in his righteousness, and sanctified by the Spirit. Sanctify us, we pray thee, through thy truth, thy word is truth. O may the Holy Spirit convince us of sin, and excite within us that godly sorrow which leadeth unto repentance, not to be repented of. May we hate sin more and more, and shun it as that evil and bitter thing which thou abhorrest. May we depart from evil and do good, and dwell for evermore. May we live henceforth not to ourselves, but to him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood. Help us to live as those who have been bought at such a price. Help us to live as those who have such glorious promises and prospects. May we have grace to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. O Lord, we commit ourselves to thy care and keeping this night. May our bodies be refreshed by sleep, and our souls by thy grace. If we awake in the night season, may we meditate on thee. If it be thy holy will, spare us to see the light of another day of the Son

of man, and when we rise in the morning, may our first and best thoughts be of thee and of heavenly things. O Lord, we earnestly pray for thy blessing on our friends; may they be thy friends, and may they and we meet at last in heaven. Our afflicted brethren we commend unto thee, and O do thou, who comfortest those that are cast down, give them strength and comfort in their trials; and prepare them for a happy issue of them all. Bless all thine own people, and may their number be greatly increased throughout the world. Save thy people and bless thine inheritance; feed them also, and lift them up for ever. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, hearken, and do; defer not for thine own sake, and for thy dear Son's sake, to whom with thee, and the Holy Spirit, we ascribe kingdom, power, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CIV.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CIV.

REMARKS.

In this psalm God is praised as the God of nature and of providence, and it shows with what feelings we ought to contemplate the divine goodness, which fills the whole earth. How blind must those be, who can look abroad throughout the world, without seeing any traces of the Lord's working, and without having their thoughts raised in holy adoration? Well may we exclaim, 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all!'

The psalmist being about to speak of God's works, opens with a magnificent view of the divine greatness and majesty, describing him as having light for a garment, the heavens for a tent, the clouds for his chariot, and the winds for his messengers. From thus beholding the Lord's majesty in the heavens, we next come down to the earth, and are called to behold his wisdom in its formation, and his goodness with which it is filled. We have an account of its state of chaos, where the waters covered the face of the earth, and then of the way in which order was brought out of confusion, when the waters were gathered together into one place, and the dry land appeared. Having thus seen the waters confined within their appointed bounds, we are called to look abroad over the earth, and even into the depths of the sea; and behold everywhere the riches of the Lord's goodness. The earth is visited with refreshing showers, and yields abundance for supplying the wants of all the creatures. The inferior animals have their food and their habitations provided for them. The birds, which sing among the branches, have their nests, and the wild goats have the high

hills for a refuge. And surely he, who clotheth the grass with beauty, and feedeth the fowls of the air, and provideth habitations for all his creatures, will never allow his redeemed people to want any good thing, but will be to them both a refuge and a portion in the land of the living. The psalmist also praises God for the succession of day and night, and the constant revolution of the seasons. And, O let us remember that our days are rapidly passing away, and let us redeem the time. Does man go forth to his work and ply his labour till the evening? and shall we not improve the day of grace while it lasts, knowing that the night cometh when no man can work? After such a review of the Lord's works, the psalmist concludes by declaring his own resolution to praise God, and the destruction of those who refuse to do so. And, O let us join the psalmist this day, when we are led to review a greater work than that of creation, and to give thanks for better blessings than those which supply our temporal wants. If the Lord rejoiceth in the works which are here described, much more does he rejoice in the work of our redemption. Surely our meditation may be sweet, when we remember that our Lord is risen indeed, and that his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and with majesty; thou coverest thyself with light, as with a garment, dwelling in light which is inaccessible and full of glory. Thou hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens also are the work of thy hands. Thou art worthy to receive glory, and honour, and blessing, and praise: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. We adore thee, O Lord, for all thy goodness. Every morning that dawns brings us new tokens of thy love, and every evening we have to rejoice in thy faithfulness. Alas, that we are so ungrateful for thy favours! Each day we rise it becometh us to bless thee, and to praise thy name as long as we live. This morning especially we will be glad in the Lord, and our meditation of him shall be sweet. This is the day thou hast made, we will rejoice and be glad in it. The stone which the builders rejected, has become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, and it is wondrous in our eyes. Hosannah to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord to save us! Hosannah in the highest. O Lord, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we bless thee that thou art reconciling the world to thyself, not imputing unto men their trespasses; and we entreat of thee to be merciful unto us, and grant us thy favour for Jesus' sake. We have sinned and done very wickedly, and if it had not been for thy great

mercy, we had long ago been consumed out of the earth. O enter not into judgment with us as we deserve, but regard us in the face of thine anointed, and pardon our great and manifold iniquities, for the sake of him who died for us and rose again. O Lord, we bless thee for sending the promised Comforter, to take of the things that are Christ's and show them to our souls; and we earnestly entreat of thee, to grant us an abundant outpouring of the Spirit this morning. With the light of this morning, may the day-spring from on high visit us, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Come, O blessed Spirit of grace, and breathe on the dry bones that they may live. Revive and quicken us, O God. Enlighten our minds, and enlarge and purify our hearts. Help us to enter into the spirit of this day's services, and may they be blessed for our spiritual improvement and growth in grace. May it be a time of refreshing to us from the presence of the Lord. We would, this morning, remember before thee all our brethren of mankind. May this be a great day in the church, and may many be added to it of them that are to be saved. O may many be glad this day, when it is said, Let us go to the house of the Lord, and be in all the assemblies of thy saints, and make them feel that thy house is indeed the very gate of heaven. O be with all the afflicted who are this day to be detained from thy house of prayer. Be a little sanctuary to them in their retirement, and when kept away from the streams, may they draw, by faith, from the living fountain. Bless all our dear friends this day, and may they and we join in spirit, and be all prepared for a final meeting in the temple above. And now, O Lord, we commit ourselves to thee. Go with us to thy house, fit us for thy service, and accept of us and our worship. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in thy sight, through Jesus Christ our strength and Redeemer. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CV.

REMARKS.

In this psalm God is praised as the God of grace, and mention is made of his special goodness to the church. We learn from 1 Chron. 16th chapter, that the first part of this psalm was composed and sung, when David brought up the ark and placed it in Zion; and how suitable, that on such an occasion,

the people should talk of all the wondrous works of the Lord. The psalmist begins calling upon all to praise the Lord; and to excite their praises, he reminds them of the marvellous events of their past history. He gives a beautiful narrative of God's dealings with his ancient church, representing all as the fulfilment of the covenant he made with Abraham. This covenant God remembered, although, at some dark periods of their history, his people might be ready to think he had forgotten it. They were few in number when the promise was made, and for a long while they were strangers going from land to land; but few and feeble as they were, they were quite safe under the protection of God, who suffered no man to do them wrong. He sent Joseph before them into Egypt, to secure for them a favourable reception in the land where they were to sojourn for so many years. In that land his people increased according to the promise, and when they were oppressed by their enemies, and to human appearance were on the eve of destruction, God again remembered his covenant, and sent his servant Moses to deliver them. They were brought out with a high hand, and after being miraculously supported in the wilderness, they got the lands of the heathen for their possession. These things God did for them, that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws.

Such are the wonderful works for which the psalmist calls upon all to praise the Lord, and surely we cannot read this psalm, without remembering things still more interesting in the history of the gospel church. Truly God hath remembered his covenant in sending his Son to suffer and die for our sins. In what is here said of God's ancient people, we are reminded of the early history of the Christian church. When believers were few in number, and treated as the filth of the world, God protected them and made his word to grow mightily and prevail even in the midst of persecutions. In what is here said of Joseph, who was sold into Egypt as a slave, and afterwards made ruler of the land, we are reminded of our Redeemer, who was sold and imprisoned, but who, when the appointed time came, was delivered from the power of the grave, and exalted as the Head of the church, to dispense among his people all the blessings of salvation. In what is said of the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt, we are reminded of our own spiritual redemption. Jesus having shed his precious blood as an atonement for our sins, and having rescued us from the power of satan, leads us through the wilderness of this world to the promised land of rest in heaven. And let us remember that as God placed his ancient people in Canaan, that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws, so Christ hath died to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

PRAYER.

O Lord God of heaven and of earth, it is a good thing for us to draw near unto thee, and to sing praises to thy holy name—to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithful-

ness every night. This evening we would renew our grateful thanksgivings for the great salvation. Thanks be unto thee, O Father of all, for thine unspeakable gift. Thanks be unto thee, O eternal Son, because though thou wast rich, thou didst for our sakes become poor. And thanks be unto thee, O blessed Spirit of grace, because thou condescendest to dwell in our sinful hearts, and dost purify us from our corruptions. Behold what manner of love is this! O the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of such love! it passeth knowledge. We beseech thee, O Lord, that we may be all partakers of those blessings which Jesus hath purchased with his blood, and is exalted to bestow. We deserve not any favour. We are altogether vile and unworthy, and merit everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. But grant, O Lord, that we may be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, that all our guilt may be washed away, and justice may see in us no iniquity. O grant that our robes may be washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb; and being redeemed from all sin, may we be a peculiar people, zealous of good works. May the love of Christ constrain us to live not to ourselves, but to him that died and rose again. May we be enabled to bear about with us the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in our mortal bodies. We thank thee, O Lord, for the promise of a better country, and O grant that every day we may be more prepared for it. Support and protect us, O Lord, while we are in this wilderness. Enable us to use thy word as a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path. Feed us daily with the hidden manna—the bread of life that cometh down from heaven; and refresh our souls with those living waters, which flow from the rock of our salvation. O Lord, we pray for thy blessing on the religious exercises of this day. Forgive the sins of which we have been guilty in waiting on thee. Pour out upon us the influences of thy Holy Spirit, and water the seed sown, and make it bring forth abundantly. Bless the whole Christian church, and extend the gospel throughout all the earth. Send, we beseech thee, a plenteous rain to refresh thine inheritance when it is weary. Revive thy work in the place where we dwell; and quicken more and more our own souls. O Lord, be the friend of our friends; be the comforter of the afflicted; be the support of the dying. O Lord, we commit ourselves to thy keeping this night. Give us the sleep of thy beloved, and awake us in the morning, if it be thy will,

strengthened in body, and refreshed in spirit, and enable us to go on our way rejoicing, asking the way to Zion, with our faces thitherward. Now, unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, and our Saviour, be glory, honour, and praise, now and for ever. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIX. 4.

SCRIPTURE—ECCLESIASTES IX.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—3. In this world, the providence of God makes no open and marked distinction between the righteous and the wicked. The wheat and the tares are permitted to grow together until the harvest, and are equally exposed to all the vicissitudes of this chequered scene: 'there is one event to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not.' The children of God are not exempted from the trials and afflictions of life; but they are assured that all things shall work together for their good. Their eternal interests are secured by the word of promise, for 'as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about his people from henceforth, even for ever.' He will guide them by his counsel through all the stages of their pilgrimage upon earth, and afterwards receive them into glory. He may now lead them by a way which they know not; but the time is fast approaching when the mystery of providence will be laid open to their view; and then, they will see cause to adore for ever the infinite wisdom by which they were guided amidst so many dangers, and brought at length to a haven of eternal rest. Although in this world, there may seem to be no distinction between the righteous and the wicked, yet assuredly the Lord knoweth them that are his; and on the day of judgment there will be a complete and final separation of the clean from the unclean; for any thing that defileth shall in no wise enter within the gates of the New Jerusalem. Though hand join in hand, yet the wicked shall not be unpunished. Ver. 4—12. The present life is a precious season, and therefore ought to be carefully improved. While we are in the land of the living, we are in the place of hope; for now is the accepted time and the day of salvation. We know that it is appointed for all men once to die, and we are frequently reminded of the shortness and uncertainty of life. Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? One generation cometh, and another goeth, and ere long the place which now knoweth us, shall know us no more for ever. We too must bid farewell to all that is dear to us here below, and take our departure into that world of spirits whence there is no return. How important then to obtain an interest in him who is the resurrection and the life, that when he who is our life

shall appear, we also may appear with him in glory! We know not what a day or an hour may bring forth. Neither youth, nor health, nor strength, can ward off the stroke of death; and, therefore, it is our interest, as well as our duty, to be up and doing while it is called to-day, seeing that there is neither wisdom, nor knowledge, nor device in the grave, whither we are fast hastening. Ver. 13—18. It is not in man who walketh, to direct his own steps. He must be instructed by the word and Spirit of God, before he will pursue the path of duty, or attend to the things which belong to his peace. 'The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.' He who is under the influence of this heavenly principle, has sources of comfort which the world know nothing of; while at the same time, he is a blessing to the community in which he dwells. His holy walk and godly conversation have a tendency to form the character, and regulate the conduct of those with whom he associates; and hence it is said that he who walketh with the wise shall be wise: hence also our Lord enjoined his disciples to let their light so shine among men, that others seeing their good works might be led to glorify their Father who is in heaven. Let us seek then the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, and a fountain of life, that we may walk as becometh the children of the light and of the day. Let us seek that Christ may be made of God unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: that he may be formed in us the hope of glory.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art great, and greatly to be feared; thou art possessed of every perfection which is fitted to call forth the reverence, the admiration, and the love of thine intelligent offspring. Thou art seated upon a throne of glory; but we rejoice to know, that it is also a throne of mercy. Thou didst not leave us to perish in our sins; but didst lay our help upon one mighty to save, even upon Christ Jesus the righteous. We thank thee for all that he did and suffered, in the room of his people. We thank thee that he satisfied all the demands of law and justice; and that he is now revealed in the gospel, as the author of eternal redemption to every one that believeth. We have no merit of our own; but we plead the merits of Christ. For his sake, do thou pardon our iniquity, do thou receive us graciously, and love us freely. May we be reconciled by the blood of the cross; and enjoy communion with thee the Father, and with thy Son Christ Jesus. Make us thy temples: do thou dwell in us, and walk in us; be our God, and we shall be thy people. Adorn our souls with every grace; and may we advance from one degree of spiritual attainment to another; even till we arrive perfect, before thee

in Zion. O Lord, it is not in us who walk to direct our own steps: do thou keep our feet from falling, and our eyes from tears. Guide us by thy wisdom, protect us by thy power, and bring us at last to thy heavenly kingdom. Make thy grace sufficient for us, and thy strength perfect in our weakness. May we dwell in safety under the shadow of thy wing; and rejoice in thee, the God of our salvation. Subdue, we beseech thee, the pride of our hearts, take away the carnality of our minds, and conform us to thine own image. May the mind which was in Christ, be also found in us. And, O Lord, enable us to bear in mind, that every moment is bringing us nearer to the grave; that ere long, we must appear at thy solemn tribunal, to render an account to thee, the Judge of all the earth. O make us the subjects of thy grace here, that we may enter into thy glory hereafter. Heavenly Father, we thank thee for the means of grace with which we are favoured: may these be rendered effectual, in promoting the salvation of our souls. Follow, with a blessing, the preaching of the gospel, and all the religious exercises of thy holy day. Water the seed which has been sown, that it may take root in the hearts of many, and bring forth fruit to thy praise and glory. Prosper thine own cause in the world; may the Holy Spirit be poured out as in former days, that the moral wilderness may be made to rejoice, and to blossom as the rose. May thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Bless our friends and relations: give them an interest in thy favour, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. Go with us this day wherever we go: may thy presence be with us and give us rest. Thou knowest our besetting sins, thou knowest the temptations to which we are exposed: O may thy holy arm be around us for good; keep us in thy fear, and in thy favour. Blot out our manifold sins: give us that which thou knowest to be needful for us: accept of our united thanks, for thy care over us, through the silent watches of the last night; and all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXV. 6.

SCRIPTURE—2 CORINTHIANS VIII.

REMARKS.

In his former epistle to the Corinthian church, the apostle had recommended to the sympathy and

charity of its members, the persecuted and destitute Christians in Judea. They had, at first, felt the force of the appeal which he made to them, and had begun to prepare such a contribution as might express the sincerity and strength of their commiseration, and alleviate the sufferings which a resolute adherence to the gospel had brought upon their fellow-believers; but the divisions and contentions which arose and prevailed among them, not only weakened the fervour of their mutual love, but also cut asunder the tie of interest and affection which connected them with other and distant churches. A whole year had elapsed since they had begun to collect, and yet the contemplated expression of their Christian sympathy had not been made. In order to awaken them to a sense of duty, and to provoke them to a ready and hearty discharge of it, the apostle, in this chapter, points to the example of the churches of Macedonia. These believing communities had themselves suffered a severe persecution, which must have diminished their resources, and crippled their charitable efforts; yet they had spontaneously, and with much self-denial, contributed to the relief of their fellow-sufferers in Judea, and had requested the apostle to take charge of the transmission of their offering. He refers to the fact, that, as a church, they were remarkable for possessing in great diversity the gifts of the Spirit, and counsels them to complete the number by adding that of a ready and considerate charity. He gives them to understand that they ought not to consider what he says as amounting to a command, as their contributions would be deprived of their appropriate character, if they were not offered without the slightest constraint. He appeals at once to their judgments and feelings, by pointing to the authoritative and persuasive example of Christ, with which they were already familiar; for he, though he was rich in divine and celestial glory, became poor in his outward condition as a man, in order to remove the spiritual destitution and wretchedness of the human race. He anticipates the objection which might be grounded upon their inability to contribute liberally, by assuring them that the willingness of the giver was of much greater importance than the intrinsic value of the gift. And he declared to them that his object was not to enrich the Jewish believers by making unreasonable exactions from them, but only to procure a temporary relief for those who had been reduced to the greatest straits on account of the gospel, and who would not, in other circumstances, be behind in their liberality towards the necessitous. The apostle thus urges the Corinthian believers to a charity which was in unison with the spirit of their religion, and which could not fail to find many objects on which it might well be expended in that age of cruel persecution. The principle to which he appeals is characteristic of the followers of Christ. It has not ceased to exist, and has not changed its modes of displaying itself, in this later age of the church and the world. It still burns with intensity, and prompts to active exertion, when either temporal or spiritual destitution are beheld. It renders the believer a minister of God for good to all with whom he comes in contact. While it em-

braces particularly the household of faith, like that which resides in the divine nature, it blesses even the evil and the unthankful. 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. We come unto thee in the name of Christ, believing that thou art nigh unto all that call upon thee in sincerity and in truth. Thou wilt fulfil the desire of them that fear thee; thou wilt hear their cry, and save them. Who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name; for thou only art holy? We have cause to be deeply humbled in thy presence, for we are guilty and polluted: we have forfeited every claim to thy favourable regard: we have not given to thee, the glory which is due unto thy name. It is because thou art merciful, and full of compassion, that we, the children of men, are not consumed. Let thy hand be still upon the man of thy right hand, whom thou hast made strong for thyself. See God our shield, and look upon us in the face of thine Anointed. Deal with us in Christ, that for his sake we may obtain mercy to pardon, and grace to help us in our time of need. May we be washed, and justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Do thou sprinkle us with clean water, and then we shall be clean: from all our filthiness and from all our idols do thou cleanse us. Put thy Spirit within us, that we may walk in thy statutes; that we may keep thy judgments, and do them. May we be united to Christ by a living faith; and receiving daily out of his infinite fullness, may we resemble the tree planted by the rivers of water, which yieldeth fruit in season, and whose leaf shall never fade. Be as the dew unto our souls, that we may grow even as the lily, and cast forth roots like Lebanon. Do thou establish thy throne in each of our hearts: bring every thought, and desire, into cheerful subjection to thy holy will. Save us, we beseech thee, from the hardening influence of sin; let none of us be found grieving thy Holy Spirit. May we ever be duly impressed with a sense of duty; and live as seeing thee who art invisible. O Lord, we thank thee for the mercies of the past day. Thy goodness is new to us every morning, and thy faithfulness is manifested to us every evening. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits. We confess that in all things we have sinned, and come short of thy glory. We would come anew to that fountain which thou hast opened for sin and for uncleanness. Pardon, we beseech thee, the guilt which

we have this day contracted: O remember us in mercy for thine own name's sake. Bless us individually: bless us as a family. May we go up through the wilderness of this world, leaning upon Christ as the Beloved of our souls; and grant that when our wanderings here below have come to a close, we may all meet at thy right hand, to sing throughout eternity the praises of thy redeeming love. O Lord, do thou remember in mercy all for whom we should plead at thy throne of grace. Bless the afflicted, and sanctify to them all the dealings of thy providence. Comfort those whom thou hast visited with bereavement; teach them to be still, and to know that thou art God. Look in mercy upon the dying; prepare them for their great change; give them an interest in Christ, who is the resurrection and the life; that when he who is their life shall appear, they also may appear with him in glory. Bless thine own people everywhere; and give success, we beseech thee, to the means employed for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world; that thy name may be known upon the earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Heavenly Father, be with us as we now retire to rest, never leave us, never forsake us; and to thy name, in Christ, be all the praise. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLV. 17.

SCRIPTURE—ECCLESIASTES X.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1. Among the Jews perfumes were generally used in the form of ointments. It is necessary to know this fact in order to perceive the beauty of those comparisons in scripture in which ointments are mentioned. The statement in this passage is, that as the finest perfume may be deprived of its peculiar odour, and rendered positively offensive by the presence of one dead insect, however small; so one instance of folly mars the beauty of character, and injures the good reputation, which result from uniform wisdom in conversation and conduct. It is readily discovered, because it stands alone and furnishes a contrast; it is made the subject of remark, because it excites surprise; and it is published and exaggerated, because many are eager, by detraction, to gratify revengeful feelings, or to palliate their own misconduct. Unless professing believers be careful to cultivate every excellence of temper, and disposition, and behaviour, and to shun every form and appearance of sin; unless they be watchful and guarded at all times, and in all society, their good will be overlooked, or evil spoken of, and the cause

of pure and undefiled religion, with which their conduct is necessarily bound up, will be greatly injured. Christians, by blemishing their own reputation, at once misrepresent the gospel, dishonour its author, and put a stumbling-block in the way of the ignorant and ungodly.

Ver. 2, 3. It is by the actions of the life that the possession or destitution of true wisdom is proved. A speculative acquaintance with the proper rules of behaviour is merely knowledge, and is compatible with the greatest practical folly. It is in having such rules always at hand, and in reducing them readily and habitually to practice, that wisdom properly consists. Of what benefit is it to have a heart to feel the appeals which are made to it, and an understanding to perceive the path of duty, if these are always at the 'left hand,' if they are not available for directing the conduct? As the outward actions show the true character of a man, and as these are open to the observation and judgment of all, the wisdom or folly of no one can be long concealed. If the discretion of any should fail him, he immediately betrays his imprudence—'he saith to every one that he is a fool.'

Ver. 4—11. Subjects ought not to quarrel with their civil governors as such, on grounds which are strictly private. They ought not, on account of an injury to themselves as individuals, to renounce their allegiance, and retire altogether from the post of duty. It is the dictate of true wisdom, as well as in accordance with the spirit of the gospel, to refrain from retaliation, and to conquer by quietness and submission. In civil society men are not always placed in the particular rank, or in the several offices to which their qualifications are apparently suited; but this ought not to provoke to violent changes. Those who attempt forcibly to overturn the existing order of things, and to set aside long established usages and institutions, generally do so to their own hurt, as well as to the injury of others.

Ver. 12—15. As it behoved Christ, in all things, to be made like unto his brethren; so it becomes his brethren in all things to conform to him. Grace was poured into his lips, and many wondered at the gracious words which proceeded from his mouth; and it is here said, that 'the words of a wise man's mouth are gracious;' 'let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.'

Ver. 16—20. The prosperity of a country is dependent, to a very great extent, on the sagacity, the activity, the uprightness, and the piety of its rulers. The people cannot be happy when their governors are childish and voluptuous; and on the other hand, it is their own fault if they are unhappy when the public interests are managed by those who are wise, and sober, and temperate, and given to business. Disloyal thoughts ought never to be entertained, not only because they are positively sinful, but because they are likely to find expression, and thus to involve in outward and needless trouble. Above all, let no one, even in his thoughts, curse Him who is the King of kings, for he sees the hearts, and tries the reins, and judges the very secrets of men.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty; thou overest thyself with light as with a garment. Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Who can utter thy mighty acts, or show forth all thy praise? Righteous art thou, O God, when we stand before thee; and thou wilt be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest. We come into thy presence believing that thy throne of glory is also a throne of grace; that thou wilt regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. We place all our dependence for acceptance with thee on the atonement and intercession of Christ. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. With thee there is mercy, yea, with our God there is plenteous redemption, and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities. Let the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge our conscience from dead works to serve thee the living God. Say unto our souls that thou art our salvation. O be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause thy face to shine on us. Deliver us, also, we beseech thee, from every taint of inward pollution, and every form of outward sin. Let us be planted together in the likeness of Christ's death and resurrection, that as he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. O that the love of God may be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. O that Jesus Christ may be very gracious to us, as he is to all that believe, that he may be in our account the chiefest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely. And let the love of Christ toward us constrain us to live not to ourselves, but to him that died for us and rose again. We thank thee, O most merciful Father, for our preservation throughout the past night. May we enjoy thy care and protection while we are engaged in the duties of this day. May we seek to glorify thee in all that we do, and say, and think. May we have a constant, and simple, and sensible dependence on Christ for grace and strength. Whatever we do, in word or in deed, may we do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. And may our walk and conversation be such, as that we shall shine as lights in the world, and recommend the gospel to all with whom we associate. May we this day make progress in every excellence of temper, and disposition, and conduct, in every thing which qualifies for thy service on the earth, and for

thy presence and worship in heaven. May our path resemble that of the sun, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. These our confessions, and thanksgivings, and prayers, we offer in the name of Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be undivided and eternal glory. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXVI. 5.

SCRIPTURE—2 COR. IX.

REMARKS.

The object of St Paul, in writing this chapter, was to urge the Corinthian believers, not so much to make a collection for the poor saints in Judea, for to this they were prompted by their own feelings and principles, as to have it in readiness when he came to them. From his acquaintance with their character, from his thorough confidence in their Christian sympathy and liberality, he had boasted to the Macedonians that Achaia was prepared since the end of the last year. He had, however, learned, through Titus, that though their contribution would be most cheerfully given, they were not yet fully prepared with it. He had, therefore, sent the brethren, mentioned in the preceding chapter, to encourage them to go on more quickly, that his boasting might not prove utterly groundless, and he and they both be put to shame; and that, having completed their collection before his arrival, it might not have the appearance of being forced from them by his presence. That they might be induced to give liberally, he reminded them of the divinely appointed rule, that as a man soweth, so shall he also reap, in respect of quantity as well as quality. He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and shall receive again with interest. This rule is equally applicable to every other department of duty. They who are most hearty and active in the service of God, shall enjoy most of his blessing. We have no reason to suppose that, in the heavenly state, all receive the same measure of glory. Such, indeed, is inconceivable; for the true glory of a moral creature consists in the attainments which he has made. He who has reached the highest spiritual excellence, shall catch and reflect most of that effulgence which radiates from the divine throne. Every one shall receive up to the measure of his capacity; but the capacities of all shall not be alike. Every one shall obtain as large an inheritance as he can enjoy; but all these powers of enjoyment shall not be equally great. No one shall feel as if any thing were withheld from him which he is capable of enjoying, for then would his happiness be manifestly incomplete; but some having higher attainments than others, shall be able to take in more of the delights of paradise, to drink more abundantly from the rivers of pleasure which make glad the city of God. The apostle, however, gave directions as to the manner, as well

as to the propriety, of administering to the wants of others. He desired every one to consult his own heart, as well as to consider his own circumstances, and to give what he thought right, without reluctance and grudging. He whose alms are not given cheerfully, is destitute of the true principle of charity in the judgment of God. The action is performed in the absence of the virtue, and seems to indicate dispositions and feelings which do not exist. The Corinthians are further reminded, that we have no reason to distrust the divine goodness, which is able to give an abundant increase, both of spiritual and temporal things. God can make us content with what we have, restore to us what we give, and enable us to be even more bountiful in our charity. The apostle offers up a prayer that they may experience an increase in respect both of their willingness and ability to communicate to others, that thereby thanksgiving might be rendered to God, an illustration of the effects of the gospel might be afforded, and prayer on their behalf, as benefactors, might be made by the recipients of their bounty. In the last verse the apostle's mind, by a very natural transition, passes from the benevolent contributions of the Corinthian church to their suffering fellow-believers in Judea, to the inestimable gift of the Father to a perishing world. May we feel its transcendent value! On account of it, may we give eternal thanks.

PRAYER.

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Pour upon us, we beseech thee, the Spirit of grace and supplications. We know not what, or how to ask, because of the darkness that is in us. We are ignorant equally of our own wants, and of the unsearchable riches of Christ. We have become insensible both to the one and to the other, through the searing and deadening influence of sin. Gracious Father, we acknowledge the number and heinousness of our sins. Iniquities continually prevail against us, so that each successive thought, and word, and action, is a manifest violation of thy law. While we have disregarded our obligations to thy service, as thy creatures, we have also broken our vows and engagements as thy professing people. We have neither been deterred by thine anger, nor drawn by thy love, from the indulgence of pride, and envy, and deceit, and covetousness, and vain-glory, and the various depraved inclinations of our hearts. We have not been careful to shun the very appearance of evil in our conversation and conduct. We have not acted from a desire to glorify thy name, to extend the spiritual kingdom of Christ, and to promote the temporal and eternal welfare of our fellow-men. Of these sins we acknowledge the guilt, and entreat the forgiveness. Have mercy upon us, O God, according to thy loving-kindness. Ac-

cording unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out our transgressions. O for Christ's sake wash us thoroughly from our iniquities, and cleanse us from our sins. And deliver us, we pray thee, not only from guilt, but also from pollution; not only from punishment, but also from disobedience. Give us grace that we may serve thee in holiness and righteousness in all the relations of life; that we may continually honour and obey thee; that we may glorify thee in our bodies and in our spirits which are thine. May we be temples of the Holy Ghost, and exhibit in our walk and conversation examples of his sanctifying power. May we, in our whole characters, be beautified with holiness. Bless abundantly, we beseech thee, all for whom we ought to pray. Let our friends and relatives enjoy thy friendship, and be related to thee as sons and daughters. May the afflicted and the dying experience thy sympathy and forgiveness. Increase greatly the number and the spirituality of thy people. Let thy Spirit be poured upon thy church like floods upon the dry ground, so that sinners may be enlightened and converted, and believers quickened and edified. Arise, O God of our salvation, and plead thine own cause. Accept of our grateful thanks for the blessings of the day which has just come to a close. Extend to us thy care and protection during the watches of the night. Spread over us thy covering wings, till our wanderings in this world shall have terminated, and then receive us into everlasting habitations. Forgive the sins of this approach to thy throne; and do for us more than we can either ask or think of, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXVII. 37.

SCRIPTURE—ECCLESIASTES XI. XII.

REMARKS.

Serious reader, turn away thy heart from folly, and seek a heartfelt satisfaction in doing good to thy poor brethren. The words of the gospel correspond with those of Solomon; for Christ lays great stress upon works of charity in his account of the last judgment. Give alms as one who expects nothing in return—give liberally to-day, lest thy ability be gone against to-morrow, when thou mayest in thy turn need help of others, and God will make thee feel that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Let thy goodness distil as the rain; be useful and bring forth fruits of beneficence in what sphere soever providence has assigned to thee; wait not for more favourable opportunities, nor heed those discouragements.

ments which may be compared to baffling winds or lowering clouds, that may perplex but must not stop the husbandman. Be assured the divine blessing will descend upon thine efforts, though thou canst not see how; and so be always doing thy best, withholding not thy hand from pious and charitable endeavours, either late or early, as in due season thou shalt reap if thou faint not. Thus do thou live, as one who prepares to die. Life is God's gift, and it is sweet; but though it should be long and prosperous, remember there are many days drawing on when thou shalt be shut up in the darkness of the grave. A young man may scoff at wisdom, and think it folly, but while he sits over his cups, let him look at that writing on the wall, 'God will bring thee into judgment,' and then let him flee from that carnality which would end in sorrow, for the delusive brightness of early days will speedily be quenched in night. Let persons in early life glorify their Maker, while their faculties are fresh and their feelings are tender; let them serve him with their strength, and not as if by constraint, when through gathering years earthly pleasures become flat and unprofitable. We are all fading fast, and melancholy is the decay of age, for then the lights in the firmament, like the powers of the mind, grow dim and dark; grief follows grief, as in rainy weather shower succeeds shower; the bodily powers sink and decay, and refuse their office. We shall soon go whence we shall not return; our friends shall wear for us such weeds of woe as we have worn for others; the functions of life shall have ceased, the corpse shall sleep in the cold grave, and the disembodied spirit shall appear before God. Well might Solomon say, that all is vanity. He commends to our attention as sure what the Spirit had taught him to utter, and what he had spoken both carefully and gracefully; he tells us that these words of the Shepherd of Israel are to stimulate and fix our minds when we hear them in our worshiping assemblies; he suggests the important thought that what is contained in holy scripture, proceeding as it all does from the same source of truth, is enough to instruct us as to the way of happiness, and that if we seek for what is better in other books we shall weary ourselves in vain. He sums up all by saying, that the perfection of man, of his duty and his felicity, lies in a devout reverence of our holy Creator and his holy commandments; and it is a solemn announcement with which the book closes, one which should rivet our regards to the counsels of inspiration, that all that is open, all that is hidden in our habits and our history, shall be exposed and tried at the day of doom.

PRAYER.

Our Father who art in heaven, we would offer thee our united thanks that we have all been suffered to see the light of the morning—that we have been called up again to active duty, and the enjoyment of wonted privileges—that we have had an opportunity of reading that word which testifies of Him who is the light of the world. Father, we are not worthy of any of

these benefits, for we have every one trespassed against thee, and it becomes us to say, if thou shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who should stand? Blessed be thy name that thou hast not dealt with us according to our deserts, for thou didst deliver up thy Son unto the death for us all, and of thine abundant mercy hast begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. In his name we now draw near, through his intercession may we be heard, by his blood may our iniquities be taken away, and as his brethren may we find acceptance in thy sight. O that we may obtain mercy to pardon, and grace to help us, peace in believing, and joy in the Holy Ghost. And we entreat, heavenly Father, that the truths and the counsels of that portion of scripture which we have just perused, may by thy Spirit be impressed upon our hearts. May we be enabled to do good in our day and generation, to give out of what we possess for the bodily and spiritual advantage of our fellow-creatures, especially those of the household of faith, to give disinterestedly, liberally, and whensoever we have an opportunity. Save us from folly, and prepare us for the day of our death, and for the resurrection of life. Make those who are old among us ready for that happy state in which they shall renew their youth. Lead those who are young to serve thee ere the evil days of age overtake them. Let thy words be acceptable to us, and by them may we be admonished, and while we feel that all here is vanity, and that on earth we have no continuing city, may we be taught to fear thee and keep thy commandments, that our flesh may at length rest in the dust in hope, and our souls may be found watching when the master cometh. Bless not only us, but all for whom we ought to pray—thy people in the whole earth, thy church in our land, our relatives, our neighbours, our friends, our enemies. Give us this day our daily bread. Aid us in every duty. Deliver us from every evil. Let a sense of thy presence abide with us, and a savour of goodness be about us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 92.

SCRIPTURE—2 COR. X.

REMARKS.

In the present world we must expect to find God's work and his servants misrepresented and opposed by open enemies and false friends, and here,

accordingly, in the first century of the church, we have St Paul obliged to defend himself and his ministry from the charges of pretended apostles, who had appeared at Corinth. They had alleged that he was lowly when amongst them, but bold when far away; and instead of replying wrathfully, the pattern which he copies in his answer to them is the meekness of Christ. They had denied his authority, he prays that he may not be forced to use it against adversaries so presumptuous. They had said he acted with a cunning worldly policy; he declares that the instrument of his success in fighting the battles of the Lord were not efficacious through human craft, wisdom, and strength, but through a divine energy. By such heavenly aid, were pride, prejudice, and unbelief beaten down, and all the thoughts of converted men led captive to Christ, as in the bonds of a sweet constraint. Besides his prayers and labours, however, he had another weapon in store for obstinate enemies, and he was ready, by the severity of miraculous judgments, to punish the deceitful teachers, when those misled by them had been restored to obedience. If an opponent called himself a minister of Jesus, Paul and his brethren were at least equally so; nay, his miracles and success might have warranted him in boasting somewhat more of the apostolic authority given to him for their edification, yet he was not disposed to enlarge thereon like one who wrote to terrify them. It appears, they said, that his letters, meaning probably his first epistle to the Corinthians, were weighty, but that his appearance, address, and unadorned plainness of manner were contemptible—a way of estimating God's servants not peculiar to that age or country—and he admonishes them that they would find his dealings when he appeared among them as sharp as his denunciations when at a distance. The members of the faction attacked by Paul, might foolishly set up a standard of excellence by which to measure and magnify each other, but he would abstain from copying their example, boasting of doing things which the Lord had not commanded him to do, and would only say he had kept closely to his divine commission, preaching in a regular course in Lesser Asia, Macedonia, Athens, and finally in Corinth, where the truth was previously unknown. It could not be alleged that he went beyond the line of duty, or that he sought the credit of other men's labours, like his opponents who had intruded upon them, and he hoped when the Corinthians were sufficiently instructed, to be so appreciated by them in doctrine and character, that he should be able to leave them and proceed onward in preaching the gospel to the regions which lay beyond them, such as Italy and Spain. The apostle had, in self-vindication, been led to talk like one praising himself, but in the conclusion of the chapter he breathes the lowly spirit of a Christian; as he gloried only in the cross for justification, so he gloried in the Spirit of the Lord as the author of whatsoever good was either in him or effected by him. He teaches both pastors and people that it is not success, or learning, or eloquence, or human admiration, or self-praise which is any true honour, but it is the commendation which cometh from the

Lord. His will is to be our rule and his glory our motive, and we are to feel that by his grace we are what we are.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we would pour out our souls in thanksgiving for the watchful care which thou hast taken of us this day, for the bread we have eaten, the raiment we have worn, the health of our bodies, the soundness of our faculties, and for the assistance in duty, the deliverance from evils, and the measures of grace which thou hast granted to us. O Lord, when we look back upon the occupations of the day, we see that we have not remembered, and feared, and glorified thee, as always faithful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. We would not glory or commend ourselves before thee, but implore forgiveness through that blood of the Redeemer which cleanseth from all sin; we would ask for the grace of repentance, and desire that being justified by faith we may have peace with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ. Do thou render profitable for our instruction in righteousness those words and that example of thine apostle which we have just now been called to consider. Let us never be led away from the simplicity of the faith by false disciples or false doctrine; let us not measure ourselves by ourselves, or compare ourselves with the foolish standards of religious character which men may set up; let our thoughts be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and let us strive to overcome the opponents of the truth by the persuasions of thy word, and with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Enable us to ascribe all the glory of any good that is done in us or done by us, unto the Lord. Give us that faith which shall appear in growing fruitfulness, that love which shall evermore constrain us, that consistency which shall commend the gospel to others, that humility which shall make us walk softly, that zeal which shall animate us like Paul, with a holy boldness in behalf of the cause of Christ. We pray for the speedy overthrow of all deceitful systems of religion, and the universal spread of that which is true. Take unto thee thy great power and reign in our hearts, in our dwelling, in our parish and neighbourhood, in our church, in our land, in all regions of the earth, so that at the name of Jesus, among Jews and Gentiles, every knee may bow. Preserve this night our bodies from danger, and our souls from temptation. When we are falling asleep may we commit ourselves to thee; when we awake may we be still with thee. Do thou alway keep us as our watchful Father, and may we have in us thy

Spirit witnessing with our spirits that we are thy children, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM I.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH I.

REMARKS.

Isaiah is a prophet of great dignity and sublimity, who delivered the messages with which he was entrusted by the Holy Spirit, between seven and eight hundred years before the advent of our Lord, who spake so fully of gospel blessings, that he has been called the evangelical prophet, and whose name is in some measure descriptive of his high character, since it signifies the salvation of Jehovah, a suitable designation for one who foretold Messiah's coming. The prophecy condensed in this chapter constitutes an entire piece of itself; and from the picture it presents of the distressed state of the country of the Jews, it seems probable that it was uttered in the wicked reign of Ahaz, and that it points to the invasion of Judah by the kings of Syria and Israel. It contains a severe remonstrance against the inclination to idolatry manifested by the Jews, their want of inward piety, and other corruptions; and this remonstrance is mingled with exhortations to repentance, threatenings to the impenitent, and promises of better times, when, through divine judgments, the nation should have been reformed. The discourse of the prophet directs the attention of the ancient church, and of the church in our own times, to such lessons as these: that sin, public and private, is so odious to the Lord, as to cause both rulers and people to be classed with those of Sodom and Gomorrah, which, in righteous judgment, were destroyed by fire from heaven; that there is a dreadful possibility of making a seemly religious profession, and yet belying it by persevering in sinful practices; that such a profession is an abomination to the Lord, and that the sincerity of our solemn services must be shown, not merely by ceasing from all evil, but learning to do well, studying what is just and good in our public and private stations. We are made to see how ample and condescending are the Lord's promises to the people who are brought to submit their will to his; and how sure is the wrath which awaits, whether here or hereafter, the hypocritical and disobedient. From the whole we may receive a word of caution, and another of encouragement. Mark as a caution, that there is often a close league between superstition and wickedness; in consequence of which men are seen holding on from year to year in most unholly habits, and yet, to pacify their consciences, zealous devotees of some sort of will-worship; 'aye,' says one, 'many that will readily part with their sacrifices, will not be persuaded to part with their sins.' Mark as an encouragement, that very merciful are the dealings of God with sinners of our rebellious race; though he hates the transgression, he offers, through Jesus Christ, mercy to the transgressor.

PRAYER.

O God, we thank thee that at sundry times, and in divers manners, thou didst speak in ages past unto the fathers by the prophets; we thank thee, that the word addressed to them hath, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, been recorded in the scriptures for our edification; and that thou hast, in these last days, put away types and shadows, and spoken unto us plainly by thine own Son. As our blessed Lord took upon him the seed of Abraham, we pray that we may be enabled to give earnest heed to the messages addressed by wise men of old, to the people of whom, according to the flesh, Christ came; and that, by the exhortations, threats, and promises delivered to the ancient church, we may be instructed, aroused, and comforted. Save us from provoking thee to anger as the Jews so often did; save us from such evils as came down upon them for their corruptions, and which we doubt not are our due if thou shouldst enter into judgment with us; save us from placing our dependence on an outward and empty profession of religion, as if by the multitude of sacrifices we were to be justified. Conduct us to a true, a pure, a spiritual religion; to that faith which, while it looks up to the cross of Christ, is yet not alone, but bringeth forth much fruit. In our natural state there is indeed no soundness in us, from the sole of the foot even unto the head; and in our state of grace, are there not many wounds requiring to be closed and bound up? Let us approach with grateful confidence, and wash in the fountain open for uncleanness, so that our sins which are as scarlet, may be as snow; at the same time, let us be so cleansed, by the washing of regeneration, that we may cease from the perverse practice of evil, that we may do good according to the spirit of the gospel; that we may approve ourselves willing, and obedient, and growing in a relish for such satisfactions as shall be the portion of those who shall eat the good of the land of perfect rest. We pray thee to look down mercifully upon this family, and to purify us as a peculiar people, zealous of good works. We thank thee, that, in the watches of the night, no evil has assailed us, and that, with the opening day, we have again opened our eyes upon the light. How fair are the heavens stretched out above us, and the landscape spread around us! We would magnify thee as the Maker, Preserver, and Master of all, and implore strength that we may glorify thee amidst thy works, as ever seeing the being who is invisible. Bless our relatives, friends, and fellow Christians, enable us to live at peace with all men, guide us

in the several duties and relations of life. Provide for the supply of our wants, and let the sentiment of our hearts this day be, Thy will be done. We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord, for our Mediator's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 41.

SCRIPTURE—2 COR. XI.

REMARKS.

Here is Paul still labouring to remove the hurtful impression made upon the Corinthians by deceitful instructors, and to commend his own disinterested labours to their just esteem. They might deem, and his accusers might call it folly in him to speak in his own praise; but feeling it necessary, he solemnly entreats their indulgence till he has done. He was jealous for their spiritual welfare and constancy, since he had been the means of leading them to be members of the Christian church, which is the Lamb's wife; and he feared lest they should be seduced from pure doctrine by designing men, as Eve was beguiled by the subtlety of satan. If a new preacher could show them a greater Saviour, or a better Sanctifier, or a more suitable gospel, they might well prefer him; but Paul felt that there was no defect in the instructions he had given them, and that he was equal, as an apostle, to Peter, James, or John; not admitting, therefore, what the Romish church alleges about the supremacy of Peter. They were thoroughly acquainted with his principles, and although they might cavil at his style, they could not question his qualifications to teach them. He hoped his preaching to them free of charge, and at the expense of other churches, would not be reckoned an offence; nor his drawing help, when in need among them, from the Christians of Macedonia; as he had done so, lest, by being burdensome, he should prejudice their minds, and was resolved that he would accept nothing from any one in Achaia. This resolution he adopted from no want of love to them, but to prevent the charge of selfishness, and to show those who were disposed to boast, how to justify their pretensions. The individuals, however, at whom he levelled his denunciations were not apostles, but selfish pretenders to that character, whom retribution awaited; and if satan is able to disguise himself as an angel of light, it was no wonder that his servants could, for evil purposes, assume the air of devoutness. Even though they should think him vain glorious, and though not enjoined by the Lord, he would, since others were given to boasting, try to counteract it by a statement on his own behalf. They, in their wisdom, suffered the glorying of the foolish, and bore with people who enslaved their consciences, devoured their goods, and tyrannised over them: and if they suffered the pretensions of such men, he had a right to claim far higher authority among them. He proceeds through seven

mention the amazing proofs of his being a

true minister, and zealous apostle of Christ; and when we contrast our sacrifices with his, we may almost ask, are we Christians at all? A noble triumph of grace is the character of Paul, and the necessity for vindicating it, has caused it to shine forth the more illustriously. He was solicitous about individuals as well as churches, feeling for any one reported to him as weak in faith, zealous against any who threw a stumbling-block in a brother's way. Since he had been led to say so much of himself, he dwelt on the things which at once exhibited his own infirmities, and the Lord's grace made sufficient for him; and to the great Being whom he blessed he could appeal for the truth of his statements. The concluding verses present an illustration of Christ's watchfulness over his servants; and O that, like Paul, we could all trust to his care, and be ready to suffer the loss of all things for his sake!

PRAYER.

O Lord, again would we lift up the voice of praise and thanksgiving. In thy wondrous condescension thou dost visit us; in thy unwearied goodness thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice over us; in thy abundant grace, thou hast commanded us in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make our requests known unto thee. We would thankfully comply with thy command, seeing that we may have boldness to enter into thy holy presence by the blood of Jesus; and we would beseech thee to forgive the trespasses of the bygone day, and to blot out our iniquities as a thick cloud. Lord, we lament the evil that is still unsubdued within us, the law in the members that is still warring against the law of the mind, the remains of corruption cleaving to us, the weakness of our Christian principle as compared with the pattern of Paul, and the sacrifices we so often make to satan, the world and the flesh. O hear our cry for more grace, that we may strive against sin, that we may resist the devil, that we may grow more consistent as we grow daily older, that the hues of heaven may be more vividly reflected from our characters, that we may be filled with love, and joy, and peace, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. We thank thee for pastors and ordinances given unto us for our edification, and we pray that we may never be led astray from the pure gospel through the subtlety of the serpent; or, through the sounding professions of false teachers, be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Enable us to follow that which is good, to copy the noble zeal of the apostle of the Gentiles, to think less of our own ease, to study meekness, patience, and perseverance in well-doing; to view ourselves as soldiers of Christ, and to face labour, pain, poverty, and

reproach if needful, for his sake. We are frail and insufficient for these things; but we look up to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and entreat thee to gird on us the Christian armour, and to give us strength, that we may stand fast in the faith, and fight the good fight till we enter into rest. Father, let us ever say, As for us and our house, we will serve the Lord. In all our ways let us acknowledge thee; and in all our intercourse and dealings with relatives, friends, and neighbours, let our inquiry be, not, how would our own likings and tempers lead us; but, what doth the Lord command us? Spare us, if it please thee, to assemble here for thy praise on a new day; but if we should never all meet again to worship at thy footstool below, may we meet in a brighter world, to engage in a more perfect service; and now, glory be to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The prophet (verses 1—5.) foretells the glory and blessedness that were to characterise the times of the Messiah, when the gospel should be promulgated from mount Zion, and multitudes, not only of Jews, but of Gentiles, from every known region of the earth, should joyfully enter into the church, accounting it alike their duty and privilege to submit to the statutes of the Redeemer. Recognizing him as a Prince and a Saviour, a willing people should bow before him, and his enemies be subdued under his feet; while the bonds of evangelical love, that united the company of believers, would illustrate the benign influence of his government. This was strikingly realized immediately after the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. But the period specially referred to as 'the last days, is yet to come, when, after the destruction of antichrist, the authority of Jesus, as 'the Prince of the kings of the earth,' will be every where acknowledged, and Israel, converted and restored, will occupy a peculiarly honoured position among the nations. Old feuds and jealousies will then be forgotten; wars, with the desolations attending them, will cease; and the people of every kindred and of every tongue, united in the faith of the gospel, will vie with each other in zeal for the honour of the Lord, and in a devoted regard to his service. Much, however, of a very different aspect (verses 6—22.) had previously to be developed. Heavy judgments were awaiting the Jews because of their unbelief and impenitence. On account of their wicked and idolatrous practices, copied from the heathen, of their desire to lay up

treasure, and of their trust in warlike stores, the Lord was angry with them. Their land, therefore, would be laid waste, and their treasures scattered; their pride would be brought low, and their idols destroyed; and they themselves, reduced to the extremity of feebleness and fear, would flee to rocks, and dens, and caves, to escape, if possible, from the avenging visitation. This, accordingly, was their sad experience, when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded their land, and carried them away captive; as it afterwards was, in a manner still more awful, when Jerusalem was taken, and the Jewish polity subverted by the Romans under Titus. The wrath of God, which was then visibly kindled against them, has pursued them, during their subsequent dispersion, for nearly eighteen hundred years. Instead of embracing an offered Saviour, they clung to their carnal views, and put their trust in an arm of flesh; and their fate is an affecting illustration of the vanity of all such confidence in opposition to the Lord of hosts.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

It is animating to think of the prospects which are yet awaiting the church of God upon earth, when the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ; and when not only shall the profession of the gospel of the blessed Jesus prevail from the rising of the sun to its going down, but the divine spirit which it breathes shall in like manner be diffused among the nations. It is now only the day 'of small things.' The followers of the Redeemer are at present but a 'little flock,' and divisions, contentions, and corruptions, unhappily abound. Such a state of things affords ground for sorrow and humiliation. Yet, where the means of grace are enjoyed, what cause there is for thanksgiving and praise! It becomes us to consider seriously whether we prize these means, and study to improve them; whether, professing to have received the truth, we feel its power, and exemplify its spirit, in our life and conversation. Happy are we if we 'walk in the light of the Lord,' and are admitted to 'behold his beauty,' and to 'inquire in his temple.' Rejoicing in this as our highest privilege, it will be our desire that others participate in our joy. In the day of prosperity wicked men imagine that they can do without God; but in the time of adversity, how are their lofty looks humbled! How powerless are they seen to be when the hand of the Almighty is lifted against them! And O how vain will their efforts be to elude his righteous indignation, when he shall be 'revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know him not, and obey not his gospel!'

PRAAYER.

O Lord, it is good for us to draw near unto thee, for they that are far from thee must perish. In thy favour is life, and thy loving-kindness is better than life. May we esteem it our highest privilege to be permitted to come before thee to ask an interest in thy gracious regard. We acknowledge our unworthiness of the least of thy mercies, for we are guilty and polluted creatures.

We have forgotten thee our Maker, and have lightly esteemed thee, the Rock of our salvation. We have had respect unto lying vanities, and have been lovers of pleasures more than lovers of thee. It is because thy compassions fail not that we have not ere now been visited with everlasting destruction from thy presence, and from the glory of thy power. Our only hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ, thy Son, whom thou hast set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. We bless thee for him as thy unspeakable gift, and pray that we may be made partakers of all his benefits. May he be made of thee unto each of us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. May he be, in each of us, the hope of glory. And while we desire to rejoice in the freeness and fullness of the grace that is treasured up in him, may we feel the obligation under which the manifestation of this grace has laid us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the world. While we entreat thee, for the sake of the blessed Redeemer, to give us the pardon of every past transgression, may the Holy Spirit so take possession of our hearts, that we may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works, and be advancing daily in a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. We thank thee for the means of grace with which thou hast favoured us. May we be enabled to improve; and may the blessings which we enjoy be imparted to the people of every land, till at last all shall know thee from the least unto the greatest. May Christ the Lord be speedily revealed as a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel; and may every scriptural means employed for the conversion of the nations be blessed by thee. We praise thee for all the kindness with which thou art daily visiting us; for food and raiment; for health of body and soundness of mind; for protection by night as well as by day. We desire to begin this day with thee, and to commit ourselves to thy guidance in our going out and coming in. With ourselves we would remember before thee those in whom we are specially interested, and our fellow-men every where, whether in health or sickness, in prosperity or adversity. May we never forget what we owe to thee, the giver of all good. May we be kept in the love of thee our God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And all that we ask is for his sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 17.

SCRIPTURE—2 COR. XII.

REMARKS.

In defence of his character and office, which a party at Corinth had called in question, the apostle continues his narrative of the manner of the Lord's dealings with him; adverting to a remarkable vision, with which, fourteen years before, he had been favoured of the glories of the upper sanctuary. Whether in the body, or in spirit only, he could not tell; but he had been so brought into contact with the heavenly world, that its very language had burst upon his ear, and he had heard, in consequence, that to which no mortal tongue might give utterance. Thus graciously had the Lord owned him: nor may we presume to set limits to the measure of blessed experience, with which he may see it meet to visit any of his people here below. Of the nearness, indeed, to which the believer may have been admitted to the presence and enjoyment of God, it becomes him not to boast, yet there are occasions, on which he may, and ought to tell, what the Lord has done for his soul. We are in danger, however, of being elated under a sense of high privileges. Accordingly, lest the apostle should have been tempted to arrogate to himself in any measure that which was due to God alone, he had since been subjected to 'a thorn in the flesh,' which, whatever it may have been, had made him feel in a very painful manner his own weakness, and which, as 'the messenger of Satan to buffet him,' was the more trying, inasmuch as it had apparently been a means of impeding his usefulness in the Lord's vineyard. Those of the faithful, who have been favoured with an 'abundance of revelations' above their brethren, have usually had greater trials than they in the spiritual life. Their blessed Master sees it necessary that it should be so, that a conviction of their unworthiness as sinners may ever be present to their mind, and that, after the example of Him whose followers they are, the cross may be felt by them to be the way to glory. Under the agonizing experience of the visitation which had come upon him, the apostle had recourse to prayer for its removal; and the earnestness with which he desired this was to be inferred from his having thrice made it specially the matter of his supplication. So it is the duty and privilege of the people of God to express unto him their wants and wishes, and to be instant and persevering in their petitions at the throne of the heavenly grace. None have ever thus waited upon the Lord in vain. It is true, notwithstanding his earnest and repeated supplications, the occasion of the apostle's distress continued. But he had, nevertheless, an answer given, which was fully adequate to all that he could have desired. The promise was made to him of a sufficiency of grace to sustain him under the trial, and that, in and through the very weakness which distressed him, the glory of the divine power would be made the more manifest. Thus we are reminded to look away from ourselves, and to look unto God. It was regard for the glory of that God who had in-

vested him with his high office, that had induced the apostle thus to vindicate himself by adverting to his own experience. And it would be well in such circumstances for the men who had resisted him to consider the proofs of his apostleship, which he had been enabled to exhibit, not only in what he had now declared, but also in what he had done, while in the midst of them. If, on proof being demanded, there was any thing in which he had failed, it would, on their own showing, by his not having availed himself of that maintenance on their part, to which, as an apostle of the Lord, he was entitled; while others, whom he had sent to labour among them, had in like manner declined. On a similar principle, it was his resolution to act, should he again be enabled to visit them; for, in the strength of his Lord, he was ready to spend and be spent for them: and he thus spake 'before God in Christ.' It is desirable that they who preach the gospel should be so situated in regard to the means of living, as 'not to be burdensome' to the people amongst whom they labour; although in no circumstances can the servant of the Lord be secure against the insinuations of censorious and worldly-minded men.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the King eternal, immortal, and invisible. All things were made by thee, and by the word of thy power they are upheld. We bless thee for the fearful and wonderful manner in which thou hast formed us, and for the care thou hast taken of us, and the kindness thou hast shown us since we entered into life. Every day, as it closes over our heads, reminds us of the bounties of thy providence, and of the gratitude which we owe to thee the Giver of all good. But especially, as we call to mind the glorious hopes which the gospel has revealed, would we magnify thy name for thine amazing interposition in our redemption from sin and misery. But we plead the finished work of our once crucified, but now risen, exalted, and glorified Mediator, and beseech thee, for his sake, to come over the multitude of our provocations, and to hide thy face from our sins. Grant us deliverance, alike from the power, the guilt, and the punishment of sin. Give us a comfortable sense of an interest in Christ. Give us the Holy Spirit, to enlighten our understandings, to purify our hearts, and to lead us into all truth; so that, as thy redeemed people, we may be devoted to thy will, and ever ready to show forth thy praise. May we have such evidence of a good work having been begun within us, and of its progress towards maturity, that the close of each successive day may be associated in our minds with the conviction that our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. Forgive the many trespasses we have this day committed, and grant that the thought of our daily shortcomings may

stimulate us to increasing watchfulness, and to a livelier sense of our need of supplies out of the fullness that is treasured up in Christ. And now that we desire to commit ourselves to thy care and protection throughout the night, be pleased to keep us from all evil, and to prepare us for all that may be awaiting us in the course of thy providence. With ourselves we would make mention of all whom it becomes us to remember at the footstool of thy throne, whether in health or sickness, in prosperity or adversity, whether life or death be the portion in store for them. And especially would we pray for the spiritual well-being of our fellow-men, entreating thee to cause the light of thy truth to shine in every land, till at last the whole earth shall be filled with the Redeemer's glory. Bless the efforts that are now being made to evangelize the nations. Be gracious to that portion of thy church planted amongst ourselves. Grant that a spirit of division may cease, and let all who name the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Graciously hear and answer these our prayers, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, our strength and Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIII. 10.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH III. IV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Because of the shameless effrontery with which they committed all manner of iniquity, and because of the confidence with which they trusted in an arm of flesh, the Lord announces that he would bring the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem low. He would demonstrate his omnipotence, as a sin-avenging God, by removing all on which they had relied as a ground of security; by cutting off the ordinary supplies of food; by taking away from among them the most distinguished of their warriors, senators, and teachers, and the most skilful of their workmen in the several branches of industrious labour, and by suffering the government to fall into hands unfit to carry it on, so that insubordination and anarchy would follow, till, in despair, amidst the general wreck, it would be accounted a matter of consequence if any man, who had the least appearance of respectability, could be prevailed upon to undertake the management of public affairs. These judgments were fulfilled soon after the death of good king Josiah; while they have been strikingly exemplified in subsequent calamities that have befallen the Jews, and which lie heavy upon them at this very day. But while the Lord would thus punish the wicked, he would show that he remembered those who trusted in him, and that he would stand up for them in opposition to their oppressors (ver. 10—15.), giving to each the

reward of their hands. And lest it should be imagined that the predicted judgments were to overtake one sex only, the miserable fate of 'the daughters of Zion' is foretold, ver. 16—26, and chap. iv. 1. Their wanton and proud deportment, affected delicacy, inordinate fondness of vain ornament in their dress, and desire of admiration and of a family establishment, exposed them to the wrath of God; and they would be signally deprived of all that they delighted in, and exposed to shame and contempt in those very things which they had been accustomed to regard as investing them with influence and honour. But to prevent the hearts of a believing remnant from fainting, even in the worst of times, the judgments that were about to come upon Zion would at last (chap. iv. 2—6.) be succeeded by the permanent establishment of Zion's glory. The Messiah, 'the Branch of the Lord,' on whom the hope of the faithful rested, would in due season be manifested. Those who, amidst the tokens of God's anger, laid hold of him as their refuge, would live. In and through him their defilement would be purged away; and under the reviving and animating light of his gracious countenance, they would be safe from all that might hurt or annoy. Multitudes were thus purified and blessed by a saving application to their hearts of the truths of the gospel, when these were first promulgated at Jerusalem. And that which then took place is an earnest of the tokens of God's gracious presence on mount Zion, when the glory of the latter day shall be revealed, and the outcasts of Judah shall be restored, to have the divine favour withdrawn from them no more.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

In nothing are the blindness of the human understanding, and the hardness of the human heart, more manifest than in the disregard, so generally evinced, of the solemn fact, that God governs the nations, and visits them with his desolating judgments, on account of sin. Yet true it is, that the Lord is King over all the earth; and without his blessing, vain is the reliance that is so often placed on princes and nobles, on senators and men of skill, on fleets and armies, and on any or all of the supposed resources of a country. The best concerted schemes, accordingly, for a kingdom's welfare, how frequently have they not been utterly blasted! And why? Because the Lord has had a controversy with the nation for its manifold sins. Thus, those who, under God, might have done much to promote the public weal, are mysteriously removed when their services were most needed, and the weak and worthless are permitted to occupy their place, and become a curse to the people over whom they rule. The mal-administration, however, of such is not overlooked by God, who, for all their misdeeds, and especially for their oppression of the poor and helpless, will bring them into judgment. Good government, wherever it is established, is a blessing for which a people cannot be too thankful. It is the gift of a gracious God. And it is animating to be assured, that a period in the history of the world is approaching, when, under Messiah's government, to which a willing people shall render a hearty

obedience, the nations shall live in purity, peace, and safety.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we adore thee as the King of kings, the blessed and only Potentate. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. The nations of the earth are thine, and thou enlargest them, and straitenest them again, as it seemeth good in thy sight. While we are reminded in thy word of the judgments which thou executest against nations because of abounding iniquity, may we feel, and be enabled from the heart to acknowledge, that we are sinners before thee, and that, as transgressors of thy law, we merit thy wrath. By nature we are unclean, and from our youth up we have been guilty of innumerable actual offences against thee. If we would attempt to justify ourselves in thy sight, our conscience would instantly condemn us. But blessed be thy name, thou hast not given us over to destruction, but art waiting to be gracious, and inviting us to come unto thee that we may have life. We thank thee that thou hast provided for us an all-sufficient Saviour, who, by his own blood, hath obtained eternal redemption for us; and who, having borne our iniquities in his own body on the tree, now liveth at thy right hand to plead our cause, and to make intercession for us. We thank thee for the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to apply to us effectually the benefits of the Redeemer's purchase. Grant, we beseech thee, that we may be enabled to receive and rest upon Christ as he is freely offered to us in the gospel, and that we may have that faith in him which worketh by love, which purifieth the heart, and which overcometh the world. And while we desire to be filled with godly sorrow for sin, may we have grace given us to die unto it daily, and to live unto righteousness, mortifying every corrupt affection, and perfecting holiness in thy fear. Clothe us with the garments of salvation. Deliver us from the deceitful influence of lying vanities; and let our conversation in all respects be as it becometh the gospel which we profess to have received. May thy Spirit lead us into all truth, and keep us from every false and wicked way. May the happy period speedily arrive, when the nations of the earth shall no longer set themselves in opposition to the claims of thy anointed One, but submit to his authority, and enjoy the blessings of his gospel; and may thy tabernacle be established in this land while the sun and moon endure. Be gracious to all of us now before thee, and to all for whom it becometh us to pray.

have compassion on the poor, the afflicted, and the dying. Accept our thanks for all thy mercies, for thy goodness in having preserved us during the night, and brought us to see the light this day. Continue to watch over us, and keep us from all evil. Forgive our every sin; and hear us for Christ our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRaise—PSALM CXV. 10.

SCRIPTURE—2 COR. XIII.

REMARKS.

In the prospect of revisiting Corinth, the apostle intimates his determination, that, by the exercise of a hard but salutary discipline, his authority as a duly commissioned messenger of Christ should be established. By the most sifting evidence the matter between him and his opposers should be tried. And although in his absence his enemies might flatter themselves that he was weak, and unable to defend himself against their assaults, he nevertheless felt assured that, in the power of God through the ever-living Redeemer, who himself seemed to be weak when he was crucified, he would be enabled to show that his apostolical commission, received from Christ, was not a dead letter, as some vainly imagined it to be. Wicked men may affect to mock at the authority which the Lord has committed to his ministers, and resist and despise the discipline of the church. But a day is at hand, when, if they have not previously repented, they will be made to see and acknowledge, to their own confusion, that they have been fighting against God. Many professing Christians spend their time in fomenting in the church a spirit of dispeace and dissension, who would be more profitably employed in examining themselves on scriptural grounds whether they had a saving interest in the Redeemer. This the apostle calls upon the Corinthians to do. And if, after such a search, they had evidence that Christ by his Spirit was dwelling in them, they would by that very process be made aware of the reality of his apostolical commission, inasmuch as he had been honoured to be their spiritual Father. Those have the best evidence of their pastors being invested with the true apostolical succession, who have been brought, under their ministry, to a saving knowledge of the truth. Trusting that many at Corinth would thus know that he and his fellow-labourers among them were 'not reprobates,' who had assumed a character to which they had no title, the apostle prays that their conduct might be such, as would allow him no opportunity of establishing his authority amongst them to their confusion. As the advancement of the truth was the great concern which it became him to have in view, he would be satisfied to appear in the midst of them divested of those proofs of his apostleship which some demanded, provided they, as members

of the church, were strong in the faith, and were found occupying a high position in regard to every evangelical attainment. Ministers of the gospel, who have the cause of Christ at heart, will rejoice in the spiritual welfare of their people, even although it were at the expence of sacrificing their own popularity. Such was the mind of the apostle; and it was his desire that the Corinthians should so profit by his epistle, that, when he came to visit them, there might be no occasion for him to 'use sharpness' in demonstrating the power 'which the Lord had given him.' It only now remained that he should bid them 'farewell;' which he does by expressing his desire that they might arrive at the highest evangelical attainments, and enjoy those consolations, and exhibit that spirit of unanimity and peace which is enjoined in the gospel. Thus would they be owned and blessed by him who is the God of love and peace. Ministers and people must part. The closest and tenderest of earthly unions must be broken up. But, when called to bid one another farewell, how animating to think of that tie which cannot be broken, and by which the whole company of believers of every age and country are united together in Christ! The apostle concludes his epistle by expressing his desire, in the form of a prayer or blessing, that 'the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, might be with them all;' adding his solemn 'amen,' in testimony of the sincerity of his wish, of his faith in the reality and preciousness of the mercies referred to, of his hope that they would be enjoyed by those for whom they were implored, and of his full assurance of the stability of that everlasting covenant on which they were founded. The three persons of the glorious Godhead are here distinctly acknowledged and invoked; a consideration which ought to impress us in the most serious manner when this benediction is pronounced, as it usually is, at the close of the public worship of the sanctuary.

PRAYER.

At the close of another day we desire, O Lord, to present ourselves at the footstool of thy throne; confessing our sins and imploring forgiveness. We beseech thee, for the Redeemer's sake, to pardon our iniquity, though it be very great, and to wash our polluted souls in the precious fountain of his all-cleansing blood. May every blessing which he hath purchased for his people be savingly applied to us by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit; and, under his teaching and guidance, may we be led into all truth, and be kept from every false and wicked way. We thank thee for every past experience we have had of thy goodness and grace, and look unto thee for a continued supply of all that thou knowest to be needful for our progress in a life of faith and holiness. If it be thy blessed will, may we be enabled to mount up with wings as eagles. Or, should so high a pri-

vilege be withheld, may it be given to us to run without becoming weary, or at least to walk without becoming faint. Help us to be ever pressing forward, animated by the consideration of thy promise, that, as the day of thy people is, so their strength shall be; and that thou wilt never fail nor forsake any who put their trust in thee. Blessed be thy name for the many mercies of the past day, and for the goodness and mercy which have followed us all the days of our life. Thou hast loaded us with benefits; thou hast furnished our table; thou hast made our cup to run over. May a law of gratitude be written in our hearts; that, as we are sustained by thy providence, and enriched with thy grace, it may ever be our desire to live to thy glory. May the blessings which we enjoy be shared in by others, and not only by those with whom the ties of blood, or friendship, or obligation have connected us, but by all men according as thou knowest their circumstances to be. May those who are in weakness or pain, or who feel thy hand to be heavy upon them, be strengthened, supported, and comforted; and may the consolations of the gospel be vouchsafed to the dying. Bless the interests of thy church every where; and hasten the blessed period when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Grant that each successive day may bear witness to the progress of the Redeemer's cause in the world. And now that thou hast brought us to the close of this day, we implore the protection of thy gracious hand during the watches of the night. If it be thy will that we should see the light of the morning, fit us for the discharge of the several duties assigned to us. May we be thine while we are here, and thine in glory hereafter. And all we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CVI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CVI.

REMARKS.

This psalm appears to be an appendix to the preceding; for as that contains a history of God's loving-kindness to Israel, this details their rebellions and provocations. It both commences and ends with praise; for not even a review of the wickedness of men ought to hinder the divine praise, ver. 1, 2. The Lord is to be praised and thanked, both for his

glories, as he is in himself, and also for his mercies towards his people. The perfections of his nature ought to command our esteem, and the blessings of his hand to excite our gratitude, ver. 3. In his service alone is true blessedness to be found, ver. 4, 5. A participation in the favour he beareth unto his people, and the enjoyment of the good of his chosen, will alone satisfy the desires of every true Israelite. In these blessings consists the happiness of the soul; they yield a joy that the world cannot give, and they impart a peace that is unspeakable, ver. 6. The experience of such blessings will ever beget a sorrow for sin, and lead to a penitential confession of it; and what need is there for this! ver. 7. For we have sinned with our fathers, and committed iniquity; we have, like them, provoked God by our unbelief, forgotten God our Saviour, grieved his Holy Spirit, idolized created objects, and indulged the passions of the flesh. In the melancholy catalogue of their provocations, how true and faithful a representation do we find of our own iniquity and wickedness. The guilt of our sins, too, like theirs, is often aggravated by the circumstances in which they are committed. Ingratitude to God is the basest, at the time when he is kindest to us; distrust of God is the most sinful, at the time when he is displaying his power and goodness most visibly in our behalf; despising his grace is the most heinous, at the time that his love is strongest towards us, ver. 8. Yet the Israelites provoked God at the Red sea, ver. 21; they forgot, and tempted God their Saviour in the desert, notwithstanding the 'wonderful works, and terrible things' that he did in their behalf. 'They understood not his wonders, nor remembered the multitude of his mercies.' How truly may the same be laid to our charge! We, too, remain insensible to the grandeur of his power, and indifferent to all the attractive charms of his mercy. We learn the reason why God spared his people amidst their provocations, ver. 8. 'He saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known,' not because they deserved it, but for the honour of his name, and the glory of his power. The power of his grace in sparing sinners, is as much to be adored as the power of his hand in dividing the waters, ver. 23. 'Moses, too, his chosen, stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.' Who does not see, in this interposition of Moses, a type of the mediation and intercession of the blessed Jesus? God's covenant mercies in Christ stood and pleaded for Israel, notwithstanding all their provocations. Though spared in mercy, they were, nevertheless, rebuked and chastised for their sins, ver. 40. 'The wrath of God was kindled against his people.' 'With many of them God was not well-pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.' But in the midst of judgment, God remembered mercy. It was not for their destruction, but for their correction, that God punished them. The fearful judgments that fell on them were 'our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted,' 'and they happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition on whom the ends of the world are come.' Let us pray for

grace to profit by Israel's history; we have sinned with them, and our sins are marked with infinitely deeper guilt and ingratitude. May the Lord remember his covenant, and save us from our sins for his name's sake. May his grace teach us to forsake the sins that so easily beset us; and may all our outward privileges be accompanied with eternal and spiritual blessings; and blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen, praise ye the Lord.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, great art thou, great is thy power, and of thy wisdom there is no end; we will praise thee, O Lord, we will give thanks unto thee, for thou art good, and thy mercy endureth for ever. Who can utter thy mighty acts, who can show forth all thy praise? Remember us, O Lord, this morning, with the favour which thou bearest to thy people; visit us with thy salvation, that we may see the good of thy chosen, that we may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, and that we may glory with thine inheritance. O Lord, we would rejoice and be glad in that triumph of our Saviour over death and the grave, which this morning brings so closely into our view. And we would pray that as he arose from the dead, we may be enabled to arise from a death of sin to a life of holiness. May that same divine and Almighty Spirit, that raised our Saviour from the dead, descend into our hearts, and animate us with the power of a divine life, and enable us to live to thy praise and glory. Hitherto, O Lord, we have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly; like them, we have provoked thy displeasure, and grieved thy Holy Spirit by the most daring rebellion, and the basest ingratitude. We have been, like them, often insensible to the grandeur of thy power, and to all the attractive charms of thy mercy. O enter not, we pray thee, into judgment with us, for in thy sight no flesh living can be justified; cast us not away from thy presence. Remember thy covenant, and save us for thy name's sake. Cause the mighty power of thy grace to be known in our salvation. See, God, our shield, look upon us in the face of thine Anointed. Through the merits and intercession of our great High Priest, have mercy upon us; grant us mercy to pardon, and grace to help us in every time of need. Sanctify us by thy Spirit of truth. Rebuke us not in thy hot displeasure. When thou visitest us with affliction, be pleased to bless and sanctify it for good. May we not despise the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of thy correction. Inspire us, O Lord, with gratitude for the mercies of the past night and this morning;

prepare us for the services of thy sanctuary; enable us to worship thee who art a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. Bless and strengthen thy servants in the ministry. Give them, this day, a word in season; enable them to preach thy word with fidelity and earnestness, for the glory of thy name, and the good of thy people. Enable thy people to hear the truth with faith and affection. Extend the knowledge of thy grace this day. May thy kingdom come. May the people praise thee, may all the people praise thee. Gather thy people from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise. Send us, O Lord, an answer to our prayers, for the sake of thy well-beloved Son, in whose name we would say, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting; and in whose words we would continue praying, Our Father who art in heaven, &c.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CVII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CVII. 1—20.

REMARKS.

This psalm is a continued call to the exercise of the same delightful duty of praise, so strongly recommended in the preceding psalms. No less than four times in the course of it, does the psalmist repeat the earnest desire of his soul that men would praise the Lord. The manner in which he puts the call is peculiarly emphatic and impressive; it speaks more forcibly than the strongest imperative injunction could have done, 'O that men would praise the Lord,' &c. ver. 8. The reasons, too, that he assigns, are the most urgent and pressing. A general review of the divine goodness is placed before us; God's mercies are mentioned in a great variety of ways; the general blessings of his providence, and the special riches of his grace are laid down, as so many irresistible motives to praise. In this view, the psalm opens with a general exhortation to all men to give thanks to the Lord for his goodness and mercy. All who are capable of reflection must feel their obligations to infinite goodness; wherever a divine being is acknowledged, there a tribute of praise and thanksgiving is considered due to him; such a principle appears to be a direct, simple, unsophisticated dictate of nature, and the light of revelation confirms this general sentiment, and expressly inculcates thanksgiving as a universal and indispensable duty. None, however, will be properly impressed with a sense of their obligations to this duty, who are not redeemed by the blood of Christ, and renewed by his Spirit of grace. Of all the graces that adorn the true people of God, that of gratitude is one of the most prominent. When once men have indeed tasted that the Lord is gracious, and have

been made sensible of the riches of redeeming love, then they gratefully view the goodness of God in all his dispensations; and not only praise and glorify him themselves, but also call upon all to join in this delightful exercise. Hence it is, that the redeemed are especially called upon in this psalm, ver. 2. to praise and thank God. They alone can sufficiently appreciate the unsearchable riches of the grace of Christ; and they alone will rightly feel the obligations that lie upon them to praise and glorify his name. There are, next, allusions made to special instances of the goodness and mercy of the Lord. There seems, in ver. 3—7. to be some reference to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, their wanderings in the desert, and their settlement in Canaan; yet, these verses appear not to apply exactly or exclusively to these events. In ver. 10—16. we have a declaration of God's goodness to prisoners and captives. A description of the deplorable condition of such is given—their sins and rebellion are stated as the cause of it; and the Lord is represented as regarding, in mercy, their cry. No particular instances are referred to, but the deliverance of the Jews from their abject state of slavery in Egypt, and from their captivity at Babylon, must, with many more, occur to the mind of the reader as appropriate examples. In ver. 17—20. is instanced the mercy of God to those that are afflicted on account of their transgressions; when they cry unto the Lord in their distresses, he healeth and saveth them.

In these instances of the goodness of God in providence, the redeemed may behold striking representations of the riches of his grace in redemption. Are sinners of mankind 'like sheep gone astray?' 'The Lord hath laid on Christ the iniquities of us all.' Are 'they hungry and thirsty?' he has invited them to partake of the bread and water of life freely. Are they prisoners to his justice, captives to satan, and slaves to their own corruptions? he has exhorted them 'to turn to the strong hold,' for deliverance and safety. And are they afflicted and distressed? he has promised, when they cry to him, to lead them to that rock that is higher than they, for comfort and support. Let the redeemed then praise and thank the Lord, for the bounties of his providence, and the blessings of his grace; and let their hearts respond, 'O that men,' &c.

PRAYER.

Most gracious and blessed God, we would give thanks to thee this night, for thou art good, and most worthy to be loved; thy mercy endureth for ever. We would call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to praise and bless thy holy name, for all the blessings of another Christian sabbath; and for all the means of grace that we enjoy. But, O Lord, we are not sufficient of ourselves for this service. May thy Spirit assist our infirmities; and may our offerings of gratitude and praise be perfumed by the incense of a Saviour's merits, and be acceptable in thy sight. We would adore and praise thee as the God of providence, and the Father of mercies.

Thou art good to all, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works. In thee thy people find grace equal to their necessities, and sufficient for their wants. Thou hast delivered our souls from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. Blessed be he that came in the name of the Lord to save us. O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy. O Lord, may a sense of thy goodness, both in providence and grace, fill our hearts with love to thee, and lead us to devote ourselves to thy praise and glory. May the love of Christ constrain us, to live not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again. May we feel that we are not our own, but that we are bought with a price the most precious; and are bound by every tie to glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are his. May the services of this day be blessed and made effectual for this purpose, for we have to lament that we have hitherto been ungrateful recipients of thy mercy, and unprofitable servants. We have been too insensible to thy loving-kindness towards us, and too unmindful of our obligations to thee. We have not loved, served, and glorified thee as we ought to have done. We have not devoted our time and our talents to thy glory, even on this thy holy day; we have been too much taken up about the things of time, to the neglect of God, and the things that belong to our peace. Pardon, O Lord, our unworthiness, and enable us, in time to come, to love thee more and serve thee better. May thy Spirit be poured out from on high upon us this night, as a family, and as individuals. May he seal upon our hearts the instructions we have this day received from thy word, that our faith may be strengthened, our hopes confirmed, and our love enlivened; and that thy name may be glorified. Bless all with whom we have this day joined in thy services. Bless the word preached throughout the world. May the Lord God make known to all men his salvation. Be the God of our friends, make them objects of thy love and mercy, remember them with that favour which thou bearest to thy people. O thou who art the keeper of Israel, watch over us, and let no evil befall us during the hours of rest. Hear us, O Lord, and accept of us, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXX. 14.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH V. VI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

CHAP. V. Ver. 1—7. In the form of a sacred song, inscribed to the honour of his well-beloved Son, God, by the mouth of his prophet, here describes by parable, his peculiar care of his ancient people, and his loving-kindness towards them; and declares his righteous judgments against their ungrateful and unfruitful conduct.

A catalogue of their prevailing sins is then given, and a correspondent woe is denounced against each respectively. Ver. 8—10. Avarice and covetousness, 'joining house to house, and laying field to field,' were to be visited with desolation and barrenness. Ver. 11—30. Dissipation, intemperance, the love and indulgence of sin; disregard of the providence, contempt of the justice, and despite of the law of God; self-conceit, confounding of the principles of right and wrong, and the perversion of justice, were all to be visited for the vindication of the honour of the Lord, with the righteous judgments of captivity, famine, and all their attendant evils. No particular instruments for the accomplishment of these judgments are mentioned, but we learn how truly they have been inflicted by the invasion of Sennacherib, and by the destruction of Jerusalem, first by the Chaldeans, and afterwards by the Romans.

CHAP. VI. The prophet here receives a more direct and explicit commission to the prophetic office. Ver. 1—4. In the temple, by symbolical vision, he beholds the Lord, (doubtless Christ himself, see John xii. 41.), on his throne of grace and glory; above it, as his bright attendants, stand the seraphim—angels of light and love; their position such as bespoke their reverence, humility, and devotedness to the divine will; their anthem in praise of the holiness and glory of the Lord of hosts, was such as moved the posts of the temple. Ver. 5. At such a vision the prophet was at first dismayed, the glory of it, and the holiness displayed in it, overwhelmed him with a sense of his own sinfulness, and that of his countrymen. He is, however, encouraged by another symbolical action of a seraph, 'who flew,' &c. Ver. 6. The live coal taken from the altar, its being laid upon the prophet's mouth, and the consequent remission of sin, represent the sacrifice of Christ, the application of his atoning blood, and the consequent assurance of pardon and acceptance. Ver. 8. The prophet, formerly undone by the vision of the holiness, is now warmed into zeal and love by this token of the grace and mercy of the Lord; 'he is made willing;' 'here am I, send me.' Ver. 9, 10. His commission is of the most awful nature; it is, however, rather descriptive of the effect that the prophet's teaching would have through their blindness and hardness of heart, than of its natural tendency. Those that remain wilfully blind, will finally become judicially blinded. God, sometimes in a way of righteous judgment, gives up men to blindness of mind and strong delusions, because they will not receive the

truth in the love of it. Ver. 11, 12. The prophet's solicitude was naturally awakened about the continuance of the spiritual judgments; 'how long?' until they be succeeded by the temporal judgments of captivity and desolation; yet, a remnant as monuments of mercy shall be reserved, like the tenth or tithe, holy to the Lord, ver. 13.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How various are the methods which God employs to bring men to repentance. He celebrates in song, and represents by parable, the love of Christ to them; then contrasting it with their own ingratitude, leaves them to pass judgment on themselves; and if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. He will not continue privileges with these nations, churches, families, or individuals who misimprove or abuse them. The world and the flesh are the most destructive enemies to the souls of men, the chief hindrances to fruitfulness in the Lord's service, and the great causes of drawing down on men his righteous judgments. There is nothing so calculated to convince us of sin and uncleanness, as a view of the glory and holiness of the Lord, as revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. The effectual application of the blood of Christ by the Holy Spirit, is the only balm to the guilty and troubled soul.

PRAYER.

Holy, holy, holy art thou, O Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of thy glory. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, thou chargest even thine angels with folly. They worship thee with their faces veiled, and the heavens are not clean in thy sight; we, then, the sinful beings of the dust, can approach thy thrice holy presence, only in the name, and trusting to the merits, of him whom thou hearest always, and in whom thou art always well-pleased. For his sake, be pleased, we beseech thee, to receive us graciously, and love us freely. We praise thee for the gospel privileges we so richly enjoy, for the ministration of word and ordinances, for the means of grace, and the hopes of glory; and we pray that thy Spirit may lead us to a right and becoming improvement of them. Enable us to remember, that to whomsoever much is given, of them will much be required. O Lord, we have to confess that we have indeed been unprofitable servants, barren and unfruitful in thy service; other lords have had dominion over us; we have been serving the world and the flesh more than the living God. We are indeed undone, a people of unclean lips, and we dwell among a people of unclean lips. If thou wert to enter into judgment with us, we could not answer thee for one of a thousand of our sins and provocations. But we rejoice, that with thee there is mercy and forgiveness. To whom can we go but unto thee, thou alone hast the

words of eternal life. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, according to thy loving-kindness. In the midst of thy threatened judgments against sin, remember mercy for the sake of Christ. Cleanse us from our sins in the fountain of his blood, purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. Put thy Spirit within us; may he take of the things of Christ and show them to us. May we, by the eye of faith, behold thy glory as revealed in the face of Jesus Christ; and may we be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Deliver us, O Lord, from being carnally minded, which is death. Give us to be spiritually minded, which is life and peace. For this purpose, may thy blessing rest upon the services of the past sabbath. May the influence of them remain on our hearts during this day and during the week. May the word of God then read and preached, prove to us the savour of life unto life. May thy grace now prepare each one of us for all thy will respecting us this day. Accept, O Lord, of our united thanksgivings for the repose and peace of the past night, and for the blessings of this morning; be with us during the day, strengthening us for every duty, aiding us in every trial, defending us from every danger, delivering us from all temptation, and enabling us to glorify thee in all that we do; and all that we ask is in the name of the Lord Jesus, our advocate. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—GALATIANS I.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Galatia was a district or province of Asia Minor. Its inhabitants were most probably first converted to the Christian faith by the ministry of St Paul. He wrote this epistle to them in order to correct some most destructive errors in doctrine, that certain judaizing teachers had, after his departure, disseminated among them. Ver. 1. He opens it by an assertion of his divine appointment to the apostolical office; his authority as an apostle, had likely been denied by the false teachers; he, therefore, asserts it in the strongest terms, and rests it on the surest grounds; then, ver. 3—5. follow the apostolical benediction, and an ascription of praise and glory to Jesus Christ. Ver. 6—9. Here the apostle at once enters upon the subject of the epistle, expressing his astonishment that the Galatians had allowed their confidence in him as their teacher, and their belief in the fundamental doctrines of the gospel which he had taught them, to be soon subverted, and assuring them, at the same time, that there could

be no other gospel than that which he had preached to them; that there could be no way of justification and salvation but by faith in the merits and righteousness of Christ alone; and that those teachers, who taught that the observance of the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law was necessary to salvation, perverted the gospel, and rendered themselves obnoxious to the divine displeasure. Ver. 11, 12. The apostle spoke on this fundamental subject with such confidence, from the assurance that he had received his commission to preach the gospel as he had done, not 'from man, but from the revelation of Jesus Christ.' Ver. 13—24. And in order to convince those to whom he wrote of the truth of this his divine commission, he gives them an account of his conversation previous to conversion—acquaints them how he was converted and called to the apostleship, and details the different steps of his subsequent conduct.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

All power and sufficiency to minister in things sacred, must come from the Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Head of the church, and from God the Father. All who have tasted of the grace of Christ, will esteem it both their duty and delight to pray that grace and peace may be multiplied to all men. It is the will of God, it is the design of Christ, in giving himself for sin, that believers should be delivered, not only from the wrath to come, but also from the power, love, and service of this present evil world. So great and blessed a purpose calls for our praise and gratitude. Let us 'hold fast the form of sound words, which we have heard, in faith and love which is in Jesus Christ;' 'and be not tossed about by every wind of doctrine.' Let us beware of those 'who pervert the gospel,' lest the judgments of God come on them and us; and let us pray for the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. In all things let us strive to approve ourselves to God who judgeth us, not as 'men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart fearing God.' Let us mark, with gratitude, the assurance given us that the doctrines taught by St Paul were the immediate revelations of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the conversion of St Paul, we behold a proof of the power of divine grace, and a testimony to the truth of that religion he so faithfully preached. Let us give glory to God for such a manifestation of the power and riches of his grace.

PRAYER.

Almighty and everlasting God, we would adore and praise thee this night, as the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and we would draw near to thee by faith, and our spirits would hold communion with thee, as our reconciled Father in him. We have, indeed, offended thee times and ways without number, we are by nature children of wrath, enemies to God in our minds by wicked works; but behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. We give thee, O God, all praise and glory for this assurance of thy love; we bless thee that

when we were without hope, and without help, thine own eternal and well-beloved Son gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father; and we rejoice to think that thou hast raised him from the dead, appointed him head over all things to his church, and exalted him a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. May we, indeed, be children of God by faith in Jesus Christ; may we be called by his grace, and separated from a world lying in wickedness by his Spirit for his service. May we be justified freely by his grace, and have peace with God. May we know the truth as it is in Jesus, and may the truth make us free. May we enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God. May we hold fast the form of sound words which we have heard in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Be pleased, O God, to reveal thy Son in us, and give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ; forbid that any of us should come short by unbelief. Lord, help our unbelief; increase our faith, make it a vital, active, and constraining principle of holiness in our hearts; bring us more under the influence of faith, that our lives may be spent more to thy glory—more to the honour of our Christian profession, and thus more to our own peace and comfort. Forbid, O Lord, that any of us should deceive ourselves, by a form of godliness, without the power of it; forbid that any of us should rest satisfied with knowing the first elements of religion; but may we all, assisted by thy grace, press forward to the blessed experience and full enjoyment of thy service. Be pleased, O God, to hear our prayers in behalf of the sick, the afflicted, and the dying; be a present help in every time of need. For our friends and brethren, we would also put up our supplications before thee, O Father of mercies. May grace and peace, from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, be to all men. May all people be blessed in Jesus, and may all call him blessed. With grateful hearts for all thy goodness to us individually, and as a family, we would this evening commend ourselves to the protection of him who neither slumbers nor sleeps. May we be raised up in the morning, in health, and in soundness of mind, ready and willing to devote our preserved lives and refreshed powers to the service and glory of our God. May our services at this time be acceptable in thy sight, O our God, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer—to whom, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all glory for ever and ever. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 15—19.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH XL. XII.

REMARKS.

The prophet having comforted the people of God with the promise of distinguished temporal mercies, gives them, in the chapters before us, the promise of yet more distinguished, because spiritual, mercies. He speaks to them of the establishment of a peaceful kingdom; and first he describes (ver. 1, 2.) the founder of this kingdom. According to the flesh he is descended from the royal house of Israel, not, however, when in its greatness and glory, but when sunk into indigence and obscurity. As a slender twig shooting out of the trunk of an aged tree, he is represented, ver. 1. Yet this tender branch, which is so weak in outward appearance, grows and becomes fruitful. He whom it represents is possessed of true greatness, and endowed with all those qualifications which peculiarly fit him for erecting a spiritual kingdom in the earth, for being the Ruler and Teacher of his people, and for subjecting all minds to his sway, ver. 2, 3. Hence the manner of his government is such as is suited to such eminent endowments, ver. 3—5. This is indeed the promised Messiah.

But the kingdom of Messiah is a peaceful kingdom. It is founded in righteousness, it is administered with equity, it is grafted upon the affections of its subjects. The language which the prophet employs (ver. 6—9.) to describe its character, is indeed figurative, but well adapted to the purpose which he has in view. Creatures which are naturally the fiercest and most ravenous, are subdued and made to feed peaceably among the most gentle and timid. Nothing hurts or destroys in Messiah's kingdom. How descriptive is all this of the transforming power of the gospel! How cheering the prospects which it affords us in reference to the future! The change which the introduction of this gospel has produced upon the whole aspects of society, in the regions where it is known in any measure of purity, is of the most beneficial character; and its effects upon the sentiments and conduct of those by whom it has been received in the power thereof, have been uniformly of such a nature as irresistibly lead us to conclude that its universal reception would indeed prove the harbinger of universal peaceableness among men.

And let no one fear lest any of these things should fail of accomplishment, for the prophet (ver. 10—16.) points anew to Messiah's days, and shows us what shall assuredly happen in the last time. He says that 'there shall be a root of Jesse which shall stand for an ensign' both to Jews and Gentiles; and that 'his rest'—the place of his presence—his church, shall be 'glorious,' both in its extent and for the blessings which it shall dispense. The 'second time the Lord shall set his hand to recover the remnant of his people,' removing every impediment that stands in the way of their subjection to Messiah's sway; assembling 'the outcasts of Israel,' and gathering to-

gether 'the dispersed of Judah;' destroying national jealousies and antipathies, and making the most ample provision for the entire fulfilment of every prediction regarding the peaceful character and the universal extent of Messiah's kingdom. But this prophecy has been already in part fulfilled. It was fulfilled after the death and resurrection of Christ, when, through the divine blessing upon the labours of the apostles and first preachers of the gospel, multitudes both of Jews and of Gentiles, in all regions, embraced the doctrine of Christ. And it will be yet more signally fulfilled when the 'fullness of the Gentiles' shall be 'come in;' for then 'all Israel shall be saved. As it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.'

Let not then the people of God despond. He is faithful who has promised. And as they have personal experience of the blessings of that redemption, for which the prophet (chap. xii.) teaches the faithful to give utterance to a song of thanksgiving, let them learn to sing this song with joyful hearts; and let them exult in the prospect of that day, when, throughout all the regions of this earth, the people shall say, 'Sing unto the Lord, for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.'

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, we desire, on this morning of a new day, to present ourselves before thee, and to bless thee for thy continued goodness. We laid ourselves down and slept; we have awaked, for the Lord sustained us. And we are this morning reminded of our manifold obligations unto thee, and of the strong claims which thou hast upon our gratitude, our love, and our obedience. We adore thee as the Maker of all things, as the righteous Governor of the universe, as the God of grace and of salvation. Thou madest man upright, and adornedst him with thine own image, and gavest him dominion over thy creatures. But, alas! man being in innocence, abode not therein. The crown fell from his head; the gold became dim, and the most fine gold was changed. We mourn over this fall, by which we have been despoiled of the divine image, and have become guilty and miserable creatures. And we mourn over it because, in consequence thereof, we are become depraved, and are alienated in heart and mind from God, and are ever prone to sin. But we bless thy name, that though thou wast angry with us, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst us. We rejoice in that we are privileged to say, Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. And we pray that we may each of us have a per-

sonal interest in the blessings of this salvation, and that, having received the doctrine of Christ, and found it to be light and life to our souls, we may each of us be enabled this day, and through the whole of our life, to live as it becomes those whom God hath delivered from the power of darkness, and hath translated into the kingdom of his dear Son. O Lord, let thy kingdom come, and let thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Hasten the glory of the latter day, even the day when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. And as the promise has been given that Christ shall have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, O let this promise be speedily accomplished, and let Christ be acknowledged in all lands, and let his doctrine be received by all people. Let the time come when the outcasts of Israel shall be assembled, and the dispersed of Judah shall be gathered together from the four corners of the earth; when Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim; when the fullness of the Gentiles shall be come in, and all Israel shall be saved; and when all nations, drawing water with joy out of the wells of salvation, shall say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Our prayers, O God, are before thee. We ask all in the name and for the sake of Christ. And unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, one God, we ascribe all praise and glory. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLVI.

SCRIPTURE—GALATIANS II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In this chapter the apostle prosecutes the same design as he had in view in the preceding, namely, to prove that his apostleship and his doctrine are divine, received not from man, but immediately from Jesus Christ. He adverts (ver. 1, 2.) to the time of his going up to Jerusalem, and affirms that he 'went up by revelation,' and in order, among other reasons, to satisfy the 'brethren' there that the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles was indeed the truth as it is in Christ. And then, for the purpose of demonstrating that circumcision, and the ceremonial rites of the Jewish economy, were certainly abolished by the death of Christ, the apostle shows the Galatians (ver. 3—10.), that, on the occasion referred to, neither was Titus, who was a Greek, 'compelled to be circumcised,' nor was any 'place by subjection' given to the judaizing teachers who sought to bring

them into bondage unto the Jewish ritual; and that when the apostles James, Cephas, and John, perceived how signally God had owned the ministry of Paul among the Gentiles, they gave to him and Barnabas 'the right hands of fellowship,' and thus cordially approved of their mission to the Gentiles, and recognized it as divine. But Paul, in further vindication of himself, states (ver. 11—13.), that he had afterwards resisted Peter at Antioch, judging him blameable, because, through fear of the Jews, he had dissembled in the matter of ceremonial obligation, and proved a cause of stumbling unto others. And in his address to Peter (ver. 14—17.), Paul triumphantly vindicates his doctrine from the charge both of Judaism and of ungodliness; and exposing the inconsistency of Peter's conduct on the occasion, shows that, as man is justified only 'by the faith of Jesus Christ,' and as 'by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,' so they that are thus justified will be careful to live holily. Having renounced all expectations from the law, and placed their entire dependence upon Christ alone for righteousness and life, justified persons, as the apostle shows by a reference to his own case (ver. 18—21.), not only do not, but cannot live in sin. And as Christ himself is the principle of their spiritual life, and the fountain of their strength, so they, living by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them and gave himself for them, 'do not frustrate the grace of God,' but show that this grace is according to godliness.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Though we are not now favoured with special revelations from heaven, yet we have reason to bless God that we have the book of his revealed will, in which we are taught, both by precept and by example, what manner of persons we ought to be, and that we have the promise of the Spirit to guide us into the knowledge of all the truth. May this Spirit enable us to understand what has been written for our learning; and may he lead us, like the great apostle of the Gentiles, to oppose whatever is erroneous and sinful, to contend earnestly for the truth, and to withstand all attempts to rob us of our Christian liberty. And as the apostles at Jerusalem, on perceiving that the ministry of Paul was owned of God, cordially gave him the right hand of fellowship, let it be our desire and endeavour that charity may obtain among all the followers of Christ, and that we may 'keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

But do we find that even an apostle allowed himself to dissemble? The circumstance should lead us to guard against that fear of man which bringeth a snare. And while we are warned, by the example of Peter, of the danger of yielding to temptation, and are thus excited to watchfulness, let us imitate him in the meekness with which he seems to have received the admonition of Paul, and account it our honour and wisdom patiently to receive a just rebuke. And as by the works of the law we cannot hope to be justified in the sight of God, let us look to Christ, through whose righteousness alone we are justified. And rejoicing in the knowledge that, by the faith of Christ, we have a righteousness that is

all-meritorious to our justification, and that Christ is not, and cannot be, the minister of sin, let us seek that this faith may engage us closely and continually 'to live unto God,' and thus enable us to manifest that we have not received the grace of God in vain, and that the doctrine of the cross is indeed a doctrine according to godliness, not only bringing peace to the conscience, but securing holiness in the life.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most merciful God, we desire to lift up our souls unto thee, and to beseech of thee to pour out upon us the Spirit of grace and of supplications. Unto thee, O God, we desire to give thanks, for thou hast created us, and hast brought us up hitherto. We are the work of thy hand, the sheep of thy pasture, the objects of thy favour. We will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever, and make known thy faithfulness to all generations, for thou alone art merciful and gracious, thy mercy shall be built up for ever, and thy faithfulness shall be established in the heavens. We, O Lord, are in ourselves destitute and helpless. All our righteousness is as filthy rags in thy sight, and all our strength, weakness and vanity. And there is no man that can give a ransom for his soul, or that can obtain acceptance with God by any righteousness of his own. But we rejoice to know, that as by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified in the sight of God, the righteousness of Christ is all-meritorious to the sinner's justification. And we pray that, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, we may attain to right views of the way of acceptance and of peace with God; and that, from a deep sense of our guilt and misery, we may be enabled to flee by faith to Christ, and thus be justified through him. And being justified by the faith of Christ, may we beware lest we walk in unrighteousness, and lest we live as those who frustrate thy grace, or as those who go about to establish a righteousness of their own. Save us, O God, from that fear of man which bringeth a snare. Let us never be tempted to dissemble; but may we be enabled to walk uprightly, and to be vigilant and humble, as knowing that we are compassed with infirmity, and exposed to manifold temptations. And may we be zealous for thy truth, seeking to evidence its excellence and power by that charity which is the bond of perfectness, and by a life of holy devotedness to God. May we, through the law, be dead to the law, that we may live to thee. And may each one of us, knowing his calling of God, and exercising an implicit reliance upon Christ, be able to say, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;

and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. We thank thee, O God, for the mercies of the past day; and we pray that for Christ's sake thou wouldst freely pardon the sins of which we have been guilty in the course of it, and give us grace to live more holily for the time to come. We desire to commit ourselves to thy care during this night. We pray that our sleep may be quiet and refreshing. And if thou art pleased to bring us to the light of a new day, may we find increased delight in thy service, and a growing desire after entire conformity to thy image. Hear us, O Lord, and do for us above all that we can ask or think, for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XX.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH XXV. XXVI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The sacred writer here breaks off, for a little, from his prophetic narrative, and gives utterance (chap. xxv. 1—5.) to a song of praise, in which he celebrates the divine glory as manifested both in punishing the wicked and in protecting the righteous. The works of the Lord are represented as being wonderful, and as being done according to the eternal counsels of faithfulness and truth. Divine power is shown to be irresistible; and as the Almighty is strong both to destroy and to defend, so he can as easily quell the rage of the fiercest enemies of his people, and turn aside the effects of their wrath, and thus prove the refuge of his chosen, as in the ordinary course of his providence he allays the parching heat by the shadow of his clouds, and refreshes the 'dry place' by the gentle showers.

The remainder of the chapter is evidently prophetic, and the salvation which God provides for his people is the subject of which it treats. Reference is plainly made to gospel times. The 'mountain' spoken of (ver. 6, 7.) is Sion, the church. And under the emblem of a rich banquet (ver. 6.) are shadowed forth gospel blessings. The Lord Christ is represented (ver. 7, 8.) as a light dispelling the darkness that covers the people, and destroying the ignorance which as a 'vail' is spread over all nations, and as the divine source of that life and of those consolations which no earthly vicissitude can impair, and which death itself cannot destroy. Well, therefore, may the church be glad and rejoice in the Lord (ver. 9.), for upon her shall his 'hand rest,' his powerful and gracious presence shall abide with her continually. Her enemies 'shall be trodden down under him,' ver. 10; and stretching forth his hand against them, he shall, as the prophet predicts (ver. 11, 12.), wholly subdue and destroy them.

The prophet next indites a spiritual song for the use of the church, chap. xxvi. It is a continued ascription of praise to God. The blessings of salvation, the judgments of God upon his enemies, the displays of the Lord's faithfulness in the chastisements of his people, the misery from which God redeems his chosen, are the topics which the prophet insists upon, and by which he seeks to quicken the church's love and gratitude, and to lead her to place unfeigned trust and confidence in God. And then (ver. 19.) assuring the church that the 'dew' of God's favour would rest upon her, and that 'the earth shall cast out the dead,' or, as the words may be better rendered, 'thou shalt cast the violent ones down to the ground.' He concludes (ver. 20, 21.) with an exhortation to her to wait patiently the Lord's time, sheltering herself under the divine protection 'until the indignation be overpast.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The people of God assuredly may well say, 'The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, yea, we have a goodly heritage;' 'We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.' He who is wonderful in working, and whose 'counsels of old are faithfulness and truth,' is their refuge. He makes the most ample provision for their security and enjoyment. Nothing that is needful for their peace and prosperity is wanting. They have 'the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' Rich and enduring are the blessings which they receive. All things are theirs; whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are theirs; and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Let not the people of God, then, be greatly cast down or dismayed. On the contrary, let them encourage their hearts in God amidst even the most trying circumstances of their lot, and rest satisfied that he will bring them in safety out of the hands of their enemies; that he 'will wipe away their tears,' and 'will take away their rebuke from off all the earth.' And reflecting upon the divine goodness, and the divine faithfulness, as manifested towards them both in providence and in grace, let them be taught to place their confidence in God, to make joyful mention of his loving-kindness, and to praise him for his great salvation.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, thou art great, and greatly to be feared and to be revered. Thou art righteous in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works. Thou art good also, and greatly to be loved; thy tender mercies are over all thy works. We desire to come unto thee this morning under a deep impression of our unworthiness, and our insufficiency, and our guilt. And in waiting upon thee we would take encouragement from knowing that thou regardest the prayer of the destitute, and that thou art ready to succour all that call upon thy name. Let the desire of our souls be towards thee, O God, and to the

remembrance of thee, for thou art the centre of all perfection, and the source of all blessedness, and the giver of every good and every perfect gift. May we stand in awe of thy judgments. May we rely upon thy promises. May we hope in thy mercy. May we rejoice in thy salvation. Let the remembrance of thy goodness towards us in providence, and especially in grace, quicken our gratitude and love to thee, lead us to confide in thee continually, and make us willing to go forward in the path of commanded duty, whether that lead to doing or to suffering. May the time past of our life suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh, and to have walked after the course of this world. And though hitherto other lords besides thee have had dominion over us, and led us captive at their pleasure, we would now desire to say, By thee only will we make mention of thy name. By thy grace and strength alone we are delivered from the power of all our enemies. In thee alone we find a sure and unfailing refuge; therefore will we celebrate thy praise, and trust in thee for ever. O save us, we pray thee, from a spirit of rebelliousness against thy holy will, and make us humble, and contented, and patient. Deliver us from the evil that is in the world around us, and from the wickedness of our own hearts; and may thy Holy Spirit dwell within us, and be unto us a Spirit of adoption, and of sanctification, and of prayer, that thus we may know our calling of God, and may serve thee acceptably and joyfully all the days of our life. O Lord, let all the nations praise thee. Let all people enjoy the rich provision which thou hast made in the gospel of thy Son. Let the vail that is yet spread over the nations be withdrawn; and let him who is the light, and the life, and the consolation of all people, speedily appear to all the ends of the earth. Suit the supplies of thy grace to the varying circumstances of all whom we ought to bear upon our minds before thee. And may each of us be enabled to live this day and henceforth in thy fear and to thy glory. And all that we ask is in the name and through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXII. 1—5.

SCRIPTURE—GALATIANS III.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Justification, by faith in Christ, without the works of the law, either ceremonial or moral, is the great truth which the apostle asserts and proves in this chapter. First of all, however, he sharply reproves the Galatians, ver. 1—5. for having lost sight of what he had taught them on this subject by the gospel; appeals to their own experience, whether it was not by the gospel that they had received the Holy Spirit and his graces; and expostulates with them on the folly of turning from the gospel method of justification, to the carnal ordinances of the law. The apostle then shows, ver. 6—9. that Abraham's righteousness was by faith, and that, therefore, by faith alone we are the children of Abraham, and partakers of his blessing. Next it is demonstrated, ver. 10—14. that as the law requireth perfect obedience, all are naturally under its curse, and no one can be justified thereby; and that as Christ has been made a curse for us, all that believe on him are delivered from the curse of the law. But the promise made to Abraham was confirmed in Christ, Abraham's 'seed,' ver. 15—18. and, therefore, could not be disannulled by the law, which was given long after the promise. The law, however, is of important use, inasmuch as it shows the necessity, ver. 19—24. of a better righteousness than man's own, and as it serves as a schoolmaster to bring us for justification to Christ, by whom the law was fulfilled. Therefore, all that believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, ver. 25—29. being 'the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,' are 'one in Christ,' are 'Abraham's seed,' and are 'heirs' of the blessing with him, not by the law, but 'according to the promise.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

It is the sight of Christ crucified which both brings peace to the conscience, and constrains to holiness in the heart and the life. Let the eye of our faith then be stedfastly fixed upon him, and as all that believe on him are the children of faithful Abraham, and are blessed with him, let them be engaged by the view of the cross of Christ to receive the truth concerning him, and to beware of looking elsewhere for happiness. Woful had been our condition if justification had not been by faith. For by reason of sin, we are under the curse of the law, and utterly unable to yield that perfect obedience which the law requires. What reason, then, have we to bless God for Christ, who 'hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;' and how earnestly should we seek to be justified by the faith of him, and to receive the blessing of Abraham, and the promise of the Spirit through faith, that being enlightened and quickened, we may live as those in whom true faith abides.

Precious are the privileges which all that believe enjoy through Christ. Rich and enduring is the inheritance of which they are the heirs. Let no man, therefore, seek to be justified by the works of the law;

but let the law, which is holy, and just, and good, prove a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, and to shut us up unto the faith of him. And having been baptized into Christ and put on Christ, let us remember, continually, that we are thus obliged to be like unto him. And as Christ is the Head, so believers, though many, 'are one body in him, and every one members one of another.' Therefore ought believers, as the members of this one body, to be one in affection and in mind; and to be solicitous to manifest, by the growing holiness of their walk and conversation, the reality of their union with Christ, the excellence and the power of divine faith, and the blessedness of those hopes which they are privileged to cherish regarding the future and the glorious inheritance.

PRAYER.

O Lord, enable us this evening to come before thee, deeply impressed with a sense of thy majesty and glory, and give us grace that we may present unto thee a spiritual sacrifice acceptable unto God through Jesus Christ. We are indeed most unworthy to approach unto thee: for we are less than the least of all thy mercies, and are become estranged and defiled by sin. But we bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in him, hath been pleased to draw nigh to us in mercy, and to make known to us the method of reconciliation and of peace. And we pray that we may be made sensible of the greatness of our privilege in having received the revelation of thy will, regarding the means of acceptance with thee, and of being made like unto thee. Give us, O God, a lively apprehension of our misery by nature as lying under the curse of a broken law, and of the impossibility of being justified in thy sight by our own righteousness, or by any works of the law. And seeing that thy law shows us to be transgressors, and to lie under a sentence of condemnation, may we be effectually moved by thy Spirit to make application unto Christ, that through faith in him we may be accepted as righteous, and may be delivered from condemnation. May we look to Jesus as having been evidently set forth crucified among us, and as having thus redeemed us from the curse of the law, and purchased for us the gift of eternal life. May his cross be that alone in which we glory; and may nothing be allowed to draw off our attention from it, or to prevail with us to hope for either peace or purity independently of it. Work in us, we pray thee, that faith which was accounted unto Abraham for righteousness, and which is the great means of attaining unto all other spiritual blessings, that thus we may be the children of Abraham, and may be blessed with him. And having been baptized into Christ, may we study to put on

Christ, and to resemble him wholly in his disposition and character, and thus to evidence that we are indeed the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and heirs according to the promise, and growing in meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. We thank thee, O God, for all thy goodness to us during the past day, and ever since we came into the world. Be with us, we earnestly beseech thee, through this night. Let thine everlasting arms be around us; and let thy good Spirit uphold and protect us. May the close of every day remind us that we are advancing to the close of life, and that the night cometh in which no man can work. And may this recollection move us to quicken our diligence in all the work of holy living, and constrain us to live under the power of the world to come. Be thou the God of our friends and relatives wherever they are, and under whatever circumstances they may be placed. Sanctify to them all thy dealings with them; and give them all an interest in Christ, and prepare them for the enjoyment of thyself in heaven. Compassionate, we beseech thee, the sorrowful, the afflicted, and the dying; and suit the supplies of thy grace to their varying need. Prepare us all for every thing thou hast prepared for us, and receive us at last into thy glory. And all that we ask is for the sake of Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 15.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH XXXII.

REMARKS.

The reformation of the church and re-establishment of the Jewish polity, under the religious and vigorous administration of Hezekiah, may have been primarily shadowed forth in this prophecy which is generally supposed to have been uttered towards the conclusion of the reign of Ahaz; but it is evident that a greater than Hezekiah, and a more enduring and illustrious administration than his, are here. These glorious things are spoken of the church of the living God—things which many kings and righteous men desired to see but did not see them, and to hear but did not hear them. But we have seen them. A sight of them, in part, has been vouchsafed unto us; and they shall be fully manifested unto the generations which are to come.

The Lord Jesus Christ after having purchased the church with his own blood, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high. His throne is for ever and ever; his dominion is a universal dominion; and a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre

of his kingdom. The church of God, therefore, has nothing to fear. If faithful to her Head, no weapon formed against her can prosper. Long and assiduous, indeed, has been, and may yet be, the conflict on this earth between good and evil; and under the varied, subtle, and untiring opposition of the rulers of the darkness of this world the cause of godliness may seem at times to be almost hopeless, yet, still the Christian ought to remember that his Saviour 'reigneth in righteousness,' and that, consequently, the time must come when Christianity shall pervade the whole human family, when the princes of this world will with submission to Christ's acknowledged authority, rule in justice and in judgment, and when their subjects shall be peaceful and prosperous, because the faith of the gospel, with its hopes and holiness, shall universally prevail.

The present, however, is a season of trial and discipline to the faith and patience of Christians. Every possible form of evil is, apparently, to be permitted to try God's people, in order, perhaps, that sin's exceeding sinfulness may be disclosed, and the manifold resources of God's wisdom, and excellencies of the Spirit's grace, called forth and manifested before the universe. But the believer has not been left comfortless. There is One, a man, his elder brother, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, who knows the force of all trials; for unto the very uttermost has he had experience of them all, unto whom the Christian can apply for encouragement and assistance in every time of need. When satan assails him with temptation to seduce, or with persecution to drive him from his steadfastness, he will stand his ground in the conviction of his Saviour's presence, and gather indomitable courage from the gracious assurance, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' The various influences of the Spirit of Jesus, adapted to the believer's varying circumstances, will revive his heart and restore his soul, as streams of water do the thirsty ground. And when wearied and fainting under the trials and vexations of his pilgrimage, through the waste and howling wilderness of this world, he will seek, and always find, rest and recruited vigour, under the shelter of the rock of ages, whence all the streams of spiritual influences well forth, and within whose mighty shadow the refreshing verdure of heavenly graces spreads around, and gladsome melody may be heard from sinners sanctified and saved, rejoicing in the God of their salvation.

'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord,' shall all these things be brought to pass. But God, nevertheless, honours men by calling upon them to be workers together with himself. Let us be up then and doing. Let us speak for Christ, and act for Christ, whenever we have an opportunity. The greatest rewards are promised to such conduct, and the greatest good will accrue from it. 'He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.' Blessed is he who soweth beside all waters, and who sends forth the patient and laborious tiller of the ground. 'They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.'

PRAYER.

We worship, O God, and adore thee who art the high and lofty One, whose name is Holy. Cherubim and seraphim are thy servants. Thy throne is exalted above all height, and thy name above all blessing and praise. All fullness is thine. Grant unto us this morning, we most humbly beseech thee, the Spirit of grace and supplication, that through Jesus Christ we may come with acceptance into thy presence, and offer up the desires of our heart for things agreeable unto thy holy will. We rejoice that thou hast raised up our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from the dead, and hast given him to be head over all things unto the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who filleth all in all. The hearts of all men are in thy hand, and as the rivers of water thou canst turn them which way soever thou willest; render the princes and the rulers of this world submissive unto the Prince of the kings of the earth, that justice may roll down like waters, and judgment like a mighty stream. Bless with all temporal and eternal blessings the sovereign of our native land. Establish the throne in righteousness, and surround it with wise and Christian advisers. Be gracious to the nation. Look down from heaven, O God, behold and visit with loving-kindness thy church which thou hast planted amongst us. In every season of rebuke, of doubt, and of perplexity, acknowledge, confirm, and direct thy people. Arm us, O Lord, with the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Strengthen us with all might, by thy Spirit, in the inner man, so that if called upon, we may resist even unto blood, striving against sin. Enable us to walk by faith and not by sight, to look unto Jesus, and to have respect, not unto the light affliction which is but for a moment, but unto that which it worketh out for us, even the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. O that the wickedness of the wicked were brought to an end! Confound their devices, O God, and frustrate their purposes, but convert and save their souls. Pour out thy Holy Spirit upon us, O Lord. We bless thy name for what our ears have heard, and our eyes have seen, and our hearts have experienced, of this thy goodness. Revive thy work in the midst of the years. Revive it in the church and congregation to which we belong. Bless, O God, thy ministering servant, and give success to his labours amongst us. Let thy Spirit descend upon all flesh, till, before the light and life of the gospel, falsehood and all ungodliness shall for ever flee away, and faith and holiness,

assurance and peace, universally prevail. We thank thee for having protected us during the night which is passed; be thou with us throughout this day. Deliver us from evil, from satan, and from sin. Give us bread to eat, and raiment to put on. Honour us by making us workers together with thee in the cause of truth and righteousness. Wash all our guiltiness away in the blood of Immanuel. And grant us an answer of peace unto these our humble supplications, for all that we ask is for the sake of Jesus Christ, who, together with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, one God, liveth and reigneth, for evermore. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLV. 7.

SCRIPTURE—GALATIANS IV.

REMARKS.

This chapter, in which Paul continues his argument in support of the grand doctrine of justification by faith alone, is occupied chiefly with setting before the apostatizing Galatians the great practical truth, that reliance on legal observances for acceptance with God, is destructive of all freedom, enlargement and confidence of mind in his service. With this view he shows that the law, though of divine institution, kept, during the time it was binding, the church in a state of pupilage, like an heir in his minority; and by its ceremonies and restrictions, limiting its subjects on every side, was calculated to produce in their minds a spirit rather of bondage and servile fear than of filial confidence and love.

With the law he proceeds to contrast the gospel, and rapidly specifies several of its essential doctrines which bear upon the point in discussion. The mission by the Father, of his only-begotten Son, attests and measures his love to the world. The coming of the Son and his incarnation, evince both his love and his fellow-feeling for us. Our redemption from the law by his vicarious obedience and death, emancipates us alike from its justifying and condemning authority. His obtaining for us the adoption of sons, both delivers us from our natural state of alienation from his family, and admits us to the privileges of the children of God. All these privileges are involved in the sending by God of the Spirit of his Son into the hearts of his adopted children. The Holy Ghost enables him in whom he takes up his abode, to discern the love of God in Christ, removes away distrust, fear and mercenary motives from the heart, and implants in their stead, enlargement, confidence, and liberty, so that he can approach God not with the feelings of a bondsman, but with the sentiments and language of a child, crying Abba, Father, unto him.

Having thus contrasted the law with the gospel, Paul, after having reminded the Galatians of the ser-

vitute which, in the days of their heathenism, they had yielded unto mere imaginary deities, asks, with a tone of affectionate reproach, wherefore, when they had by the kindness of God been delivered from the thralldom of idolatry, and had tasted of the liberty wherewith the gospel makes the believer free, they should desire to be brought again into bondage under the weak and beggarly elements of a worn out and abrogated dispensation. He candidly tells them that he stands in doubt of their spiritual state, and is afraid that he has bestowed labour upon them in vain.

After having urged them to depend, as he then did, for acceptance with God on Christ alone,—for he once in his unconverted state had depended, as they then did, on legal righteousness, and having affectionately expostulated with them for abandoning him in whom they once placed unbounded confidence, for false teachers whose zeal for their interests was affected, for the purpose of withdrawing them from the faith of Jesus Christ,—the zealous apostle concludes this part of his argument with allegorising what the law says respecting the two sons of Abraham, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman, and thereby shows that even the law itself teaches the discerning reader that it ministers rather unto bondage than unto confidence of spirit. Hagar, the bondwoman, whose son was according to the flesh, represented the law, which 'gendereth to bondage,' and all that depend, as the temporal Jerusalem then did and still does, upon legal righteousness or works of law, for acceptance with God. But Sarah, the freewoman, whose son was the child of promise, shadowed out the heavenly Jerusalem reared upon the promises and grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. All who believe as did Abraham, are, according to the scriptures, children of the promise; the heavenly Jerusalem is, therefore, the mother of us all. And as the son of the bondwoman persecuted the child of promise, so one's own righteousness is irreconcilably opposed to reliance upon Christ. But as the son of the bondwoman was disinherited and cast out, so shall all those ultimately be who trust unto their own righteousness, while the children of promise shall remain in their Father's house, and enjoy the possession of that inheritance which is 'incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away.'

PRAYER.

O God, who art the hearer and answerer of prayer, unto thee should all flesh come. Grant us boldness, we humbly beseech thee, to enter by the blood of Jesus into the holiest, by the new and living way which thou hast consecrated for us through the rent veil of the Redeemer's flesh. Deliver us, we pray thee, from all carnality, pride, and self-sufficiency. Set before us the length, and breadth, the height, and depth, and spirituality of thy law. Teach us that no righteousness but that which is perfect, can meet with acceptance before thee. Unite us, therefore, unto Christ, that we may be found

in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith. Remove away from us all servile fear and all mercenariness of soul, and enable us to serve thee not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the Spirit. Shed in our hearts the love of thee by the Holy Ghost, and convince us that, in Christ Jesus, thou art a God of pardons, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness. Enable us to look with a living faith unto him who died for our sins and rose again for our justification. Teach us that our completeness is in Christ, that he fulfilled the whole law for them that believe, and suffered the punishment due to their sins; and that therefore there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Adopt us, O God, into thy family. Be thou unto us a father, and may we be children unto thee. Give us the hearts and feelings of children. Send forth the Spirit of thy Son into our hearts whereby we shall cry Abba, Father, unto thee. O that he would make intercession for us according to thy holy will. May he strengthen, establish, and confirm our hearts with grace, in the faith and obedience of the truth. Open the scriptures unto us, O Lord, that we may understand thy law. Give us spiritual discernment in all things. Shine in upon our minds, O God, with the light of thy countenance, reconciled in Jesus Christ, that satan may never succeed in leading us astray from the faith, and hopes, and holiness of the gospel. And now, most gracious God and Father, we beseech and implore thee to forgive the sins of which we have this day been guilty. Blot them out, O Lord, and cast them behind thy back into the depths of the seas of the blood of Immanuel, that they never more may be remembered against us. Let whatever work thy Holy Spirit may have wrought upon our hearts this day be carried on to completion. We bless thee for all the goodness which thou hast made to pass before us, and we desire to lie down in quietness and to close our eyes in sleep with our hearts in a state of peaceful reconciliation to thy holy will, through Jesus Christ, our all-prevailing intercessor. And now to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, be glory, and honour, and power, everlasting. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXVI. 5.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH XL.

REMARKS.

In the conclusion of the preceding chapter, we have a prediction of the Babylonish captivity, uttered in rebuke to Hezekiah king of Judah, for his having vain-gloriously displayed all his treasures before certain ambassadors, whom the king of Babylon had sent to congratulate him on his restoration to health after a dangerous illness; and to inquire respecting the wonder which had occurred in the heavens in connection with his miraculous recovery. The Jewish monarch was deeply humbled for his sin, and God, who waits to be gracious, immediately commissioned Isaiah to foretell unto Jerusalem her deliverance, not from the Babylonian captivity merely, but ultimately from a bondage of which the Babylonish, Egyptian, and every other in which she had at any time been enthralled, were but types and shadows. Great, indeed, had been her sinfulness; but greater would be the grace of Jehovah, who would forgive her iniquities, terminate her tribulations, and, instead of the punishment which her transgressions deserved, would, of his spontaneous mercy, heap multiplied blessings upon her.

Anticipating the flight of ages, the prophet demands attention to the preaching of John the Baptist, proclaiming the near approach of Jesus Christ the great Deliverer. No difficulties can defeat his purpose. Opposition cannot impede his progress. His power will subordinate all nature, even the very hearts of his enemies, to his holy will; and glory to God in the highest shall be manifested, and shall brighten, and spread, until all the world shall behold, and be converted, and turned unto the Lord, 'for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.'

The hopes of God's people in the fulfilment of these great and precious promises, are assured by various convincing considerations. The weakness and evanescence of man are adduced as encouragements to trust in the faithfulness of God. Of what avail must all opposition be from a creature, whose strength is frail as the grass, and all whose excellence is fleeting as the flower of the field. God is omnipotent, and can crush the most extensive opposition with infinitely greater ease than the scorching blast can wither the fading flower. Let Christians, then, exult in their Saviour; and call upon all the world to acknowledge him as God. Let them proclaim his strength and might; and take encouragement from the beneficence and compassionate loving-kindness of his character. We should feel assured, that the word of our God, who is Jehovah, the creator of the heavens, and the sustainer of the ends of the earth, cannot fail. What power in nature can overbear him 'who taketh up the isles as a very little thing?' What confederacy can thwart him, before whom the nations are as 'a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance?' and what inducement can sway from his purpose, him in comparison of whom all created excellence is 'less than nothing and vanity?'

And what are all the false religions of the nations? What are their gods? The devices of men's vain imaginations. And what are these to the living God, the Creator and Lord of all, and Redeemer of his people?

Why should Christians ever be despondent, as if God overlooked their cause, and did not regard the difficulties with which it is generally beset, and the contradictions, vexations, and persecutions which they themselves must encounter? The dispensations of God to his people from the days of old, may convince us that Jehovah, the creator and sustainer of all, cannot faint and fail like the children of the dust. We may not always see the reason of every trial, for he does not render an account of his actions, and there is no searching of his understanding; but this we know, that all opposition against him shall fade away, while they who wait upon his grace shall attain to nearer and yet nearer communion with the Father of their spirits; shall be supported under every trial, shall advance in the path of duty with renovated vigour, and gather fresh courage, zeal, and determination from the difficulties and dangers which, in this world of wickedness, beset the cause of holiness, till, having fought the good fight, and finished their course, they receive, from the Judge, that crown of righteousness which is laid up in heaven for all that keep the faith.

PRAYER.

Thou art God thyself alone, O Lord, and there is none beside thee: from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Thy thoughts unto uswards have been, from all eternity, thoughts of peace. At sundry times, and in divers manners, thou foretoldst unto the fathers, by the prophets, that thou wouldst send forth into this world a great Deliverer, one mighty to save. And when the fullness of time was come, thou sentest forth thy well-beloved Son to suffer and to die for us, who had forfeited our souls in rebellion against thy laws. O the height, and the depth, and the length, and the breadth of the love of God in Christ Jesus; it passeth all understanding. O that thy Holy Spirit would take our hearts of stone away, and give unto us hearts of flesh, susceptible of being affected, impressed, and moulded by the love of God. Who can save us but thee? What can cleanse our guilt away but the blood of thy Son? Who can create within us clean hearts, or renew right spirits within us, but the Holy Ghost? Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one living and true God, we come to thee. Cast us not out of thy sight. Thou wast our fathers' God, be thou the God of their children. Cleanse us, ever merciful Saviour, in thy blood which cleanseth from all sin. Pardon our sin, most gracious Father, for it is great. Ever-blessed Spirit of all grace, we desire to yield up ourselves unto thee. Take us and sanctify us wholly, in spirit, soul, and body; and preserve

us blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will put thee in remembrance, ever-faithful God, of thy promise, to give unto thy Son the nations for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for her possession. Satan has now been, O Lord, for a long time the God of this world. Cast him out. Let not other lords than Jesus Christ continue to have dominion over man. Let thy church, O God, stand forth in the might of thy Holy Spirit. Let her put on her beautiful garments of the righteousness of Christ. Let her no where lean upon an arm of flesh, but every where upon him who loved her and gave himself for her. Lead her forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. Let her lift up her voice and proclaim that her Saviour is God; that behold he cometh with a strong hand, that his arm shall rule for him, that his reward is with him, and his work before him. Let not disappointment fret, nor opposition wear out thy people; but let them remember that the cause is God's, and that in due time they shall reap if they faint not. And now, most gracious Father, we beseech thee to be with us throughout this day. Let not business engross our hearts, nor pleasure seduce our affections from thee. Let thy Holy Spirit continually remind us, that thou, God, seest us. Let us never forget the love which thou bearest unto us in Christ. In eating, and in drinking, and in whatsoever we do, enable us to do all unto thy glory. Defend us from evil, and deliver us from sin. Forgive all our trespasses. And hear these our humble supplications, for all that we ask is for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI.

SCRIPTURE—GALATIANS V.

REMARKS.

Having showed in the preceding chapter, that spiritual freedom and confidence of mind can be conferred and secured only by the grand evangelic doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone, without works of law, Paul, in the beginning of this chapter, exhorts Christians, or rather, with apostolic authority, commands them, to stand fast in that liberty with which Christ has made them free. Christ is in himself the substance of which the ceremonial law was but the shadow; and, therefore, its rites are abrogated, and its restrictions repealed for ever. By his having fulfilled all righteousness for them, he has likewise freed his people from the condemning and justifying power, even of the moral law. This in-

munity, purchased for them by the blood of God, believers ought to prize as their most important privilege; and they should steadfastly withstand all attempts to bring them again under the thralldom of rites and ceremonies, or of legal observances of any kind, as a ground of justification or acceptance with God.

Reverting to the momentous question of justification, Paul declares, with a solemnity becoming his apostolic authority, and with an earnestness befitting the great importance of the subject, that, in reference to the ground of acceptance before God, there must be no divided reliance. Either on Christ, or on the law we must exclusively depend. Either we must be saved solely by grace, or we must be saved solely by works. If, with the view of rendering ourselves acceptable unto God, we perform a single legal observance, instantaneously we become bound to build our hopes on the foundation of works exclusively. If we seek justification by works, then we have abandoned Christ.

In verse fifth, Paul dissuades from legality, by referring to the case of himself and other converted Jews. Once they relied upon the righteousness which is by the law; now they have cast it behind their backs, and wait for the reward of that righteousness which is by faith. Christianity recognises no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. There is but one thing which is of any avail, and its availment is equal for all mankind, and that is faith which 'worketh by love.'

But if, on the one side, there is a danger, through the natural leaning of our hearts to self-justification, of abandoning the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free, there is, on the other, through the no less natural aversion of our hearts from all holy restraint, a danger of our using our liberty for a cloak of licentiousness. But Christ did not make his people free, that they might make themselves more fleshly. He did not emancipate them from carnal ordinances, in order that they might plunge into deeper carnality of mind. He did not, by his righteous life, and most painful death, deliver them from the law as a procuring cause of justification, in order that they might trample it underfoot as a rule of conduct. He did not magnify the law by being made under it, in order that they might dishonour the law by placing themselves above it. Love was what induced our Saviour to set us free, therefore, we owe a debt to love. Love is the rightful return required from us, for that love wherewith he loved us.

Let us, then, live in love as dear children. Let us submit ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and we shall be delivered from the lusts of our fallen nature. If we walk according to the flesh, and fulfil the desires thereof, we yet are under the law; for if we are not under the law, but under grace, we shall be led by the Spirit. Let us, therefore, not deceive ourselves. Let us judge our spiritual state by the scriptures. They who do the works of the flesh, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. If, then, we profess to live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. This is the only satisfactory evidence

that we possess the Spirit, which is, again, the only evidence that we are Christ's. 'For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'

PRAYER.

Thou art, O Lord, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, through whom we humbly crave, this evening, access into thy presence. We bless thy name that he hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. We rejoice in believing that, by his own blood, he hath entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for all who come unto thee through him. We flee from our sins and from our own righteousness, unto the blood and obedience of Jesus Christ. Wash us, O God, in his blood, that we may be clean, and clothe us in his righteousness, that we may be acceptable in thy sight. Deliver us, O Lord, from all reliance on ourselves. Guard us against even the slightest encroachments of a legal spirit. May we be taught our Christian liberty, by the Holy Spirit, and enabled by him to stand fast therein, and never again to come under a yoke of bondage to rites or ceremonies, or to the justifying and condemning power of the law. May we clearly see and deeply feel our utter inability of our own selves, even to think a thought as we ought to think it. Let us, therefore, cast the salvation of our souls upon Christ. We plead the sufferings of Christ: for their sake, forgive our sins. We plead his righteousness before thee: look upon us in him, see us in the face of thine Anointed, in whom thou beholdest no iniquity in Jacob, nor discoverest perversity in Israel. Guard us, O God, against the delusions of our wicked and deceitful hearts. Let us not turn the grace of God into licentiousness. May we never use our liberty for an occasion to the flesh. Let thy law be a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path. Enable us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. May we not forget that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost; and that whosoever defileth the temple of God, him will God destroy. Implant love in our hearts to one another. As much as in us lieth, may we live peaceably with all men. Let thy people be kindly-affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another. Close up, O God, divisions, and put an end to schisms and separations among those that are called by thy name. We bless thee, heavenly Father, for all thy loving-kindness to us during this day; and we commit ourselves and all that belong to us unto thy care and keeping throughout this night.

Watch over us and ours, O thou who never slumberest nor sleepest, and let not evil come near our dwelling. Open our eyes in health and peace upon the light of another morning. Continue to be gracious unto us through life, support us at death, and at last receive us into thy glory. For all that we ask is for the sake of thy well-beloved Son, our only Lord and Saviour; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, our God and the God of our fathers, be salvation, and blessing, and praise, from this time henceforth, even for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXVI. 8.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH XLI.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1. God having manifested himself in the foregoing chapter, as the only living and true God, proceeds in this to challenge idols and idolaters, in order to demonstrate the vanity of the former, and the folly of the latter. For this important purpose he summons the nations to debate the matter with him. Ver. 2—4. He, first of all, reminds the idolatrous world of what he had done to establish Abraham and his seed as witnesses against idols. At the time Abraham was called, the nations had almost to a man renounced the true God for idols, and they dreaded them as mighty; but it was one proof of the vanity of these false gods, that they could not, with all their boasted might, either destroy the witness called of God, or by all their efforts extinguish his posterity. But Abraham's safety, and his family's advancement, were proof, that 'the Lord, the first and the last,' the 'I am,' had wrought all this to the glory of his great name. Ver. 5—7. He next recounts all that the nations had done to counteract his testimony against idols. They had been more zealous in multiplying their gods, more careful in adorning their images and perfecting their worship. They held them to be firmly established, yet they feared the presence of Jacob's family, which testified against them. Egypt had laboured hard to destroy Jacob's family by hard bondage. Edom had come against them in battle, the Amorites had opposed them with all their might, Moab had solemnly attempted to curse them in the name of the Lord, and Canaan's idolatrous tribes, had united to sweep the witnesses away; but God gave the posterity of Ham as dust to their sword, and as stubble to their bow; and Israel, his servant, was established in the very centre of the world, a witness to all nations against idolatry. Ver. 8—16. But the nations, enraged against the Jews, still sought to destroy them, and having prevailed on them to learn their ways, enticed these witnesses against idolatry to countenance the sin; thus accomplishing by guile, the destruction which they could not effect by force. For God punished

his people by sending them to Babylon; and the nations were glad that the standing testimony against their follies was removed out of the way. In remorse and sorrow for their shameful conduct, they might be driven to think that God had cast them off. But he reminds them that Abraham was his friend, that he had covenanted with him regarding his posterity, and would not forsake them; therefore, to comfort and encourage them in their desolate state, he assures them, that not one of their enemies should prevail to destroy them, but they should triumphantly conquer and destroy every enemy, and rejoice once more in the Lord, whose it is to give victory. They would once more become his witnesses. Ver. 17—20. Yea, in the most difficult circumstances, he would appear for their help; and Israel, in captivity, like a dry and barren wilderness, should become as a fruitful and well-watered field, yea, as a forest, filled with fruit-bearing, ornamental, and useful trees; and all to the glory of his great name. He would not forsake his witnesses. He would restore them to their land, and bring them to it in comfort and safety. Ver. 21—24. Turning then to idols, the prophet challenges them to do the works of God, that they may prove their title to be acknowledged worthy of the name. The work to which they are specially challenged, is that of predicting coming events. On this power of fore-knowledge, and the consequent ability of declaring beforehand what is coming to pass, God builds his sovereign claim to be received as the true God. And since the idols cannot compete with him here, since they neither can foretell, nor do good, nor do evil, he denounces them as nought, and solemnly curses him who shall choose them. Ver. 25—29. Then, to demonstrate his own indisputable claim, he proclaims the coming and the conquest of Cyrus, the great deliverer of his people—no less than 172 years before that monarch proclaimed the freedom of the Jews; and then asks, 'Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous?' Neither idols nor idolaters can answer a word. Therefore does he claim to be the only true God, and challenges the love and affection of his people on this ground.

PRAYER.

O most holy and most gracious God, we prostrate ourselves before thee this morning, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thou art the one living and true God. Besides thee there is none else, and idols are an abomination before thee. Help us, Lord, to glorify thy name, because of thy mercy. Our fathers sat in darkness, and at this day, we, their children, might have been bowing down to the workmanship of our own hands; but in thy mercy, thou hast dispelled our darkness, and turned us from idols, to serve thee the living God. O Lord, help us to put away all the idols of our heart and imagination, and worship thee alone in spirit and truth. Make us witnesses for thee. May we, in all lowliness of mind, and in dependence on

thy grace, avouch thee to be our God, and make it manifest in our whole conduct, that thou art our God, and that we are thy people. We would lament that we have been in time past so faithless as witnesses for thee, and we confess that as thou didst deal fearfully, in the way of chastisement, with thine ancient people, so now mightest thou deal fearfully with us. O Lord, in the humble confession of our evil desert, we would cast ourselves on thy forgiving grace. Be pleased to glorify the power of Christ's atoning blood, and thine own sovereign love, in blotting out all our transgressions. Receive us graciously and love us freely. Make us thy children by faith in Jesus, that we may enjoy the privileges and the blessings promised to Abraham thy friend. Do thou strengthen and help, yea, uphold us with the right hand of thy righteousness. Make us more than conquerors over the world, and every enemy of our souls, and amid all our contests with self and the world, the flesh and the devil, be thou our strength; amidst all the weariness and painfulness of our present wilderness condition, when poor and needy we seek water and find none, and our tongue faileth for thirst, forsake us not, O God of Israel, but make our wilderness pools of water; refresh our souls, and at length bring us safely to thy holy hill, even to thine own dwelling-place, that we may for ever rest in peace. Overthrow, we beseech thee, the idolatry of the world. Let the cross of Christ have free course and be glorified. Do thou, according to thine own holy decree, utterly abolish idols, and make the name of Jesus glorious in all lands. O let our own land share richly in this blessing, and be established as a praise in the whole earth. And remember poor perishing Israel. Return, in mercy, to the seed of Jacob. Reveal Jesus to them in thy love, and turn their hearts to thee. Accept of our thanksgiving for the mercies of the night, and this morning. Keep our going out and our coming in this day. Guide us in all our ways, sanctify us fully, and the glory shall be thine in Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LIV.

SCRIPTURE—GALATIANS VI.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—10. Pursuing the practical strain, which he had begun in the former chapter, the apostle proceeds to remind his Christian brethren in Galatia

of various duties which he had suspected had been forgotten and transgressed amid angry contention for external rites, and the indulgence of self-righteous pride. First of all he suspected that where the hope of salvation was built on external sanctity, they would deal harshly with such as had fallen into sin, instead of remembering that they were brethren, and each liable to fall after the same manner. From a consideration of personal frailty, he enjoins brotherly love, and care in reclaiming backsliders, ver. 1. Next he suspected that where they were severally turned from the one foundation of hope to personal efforts, each would look to himself and leave his neighbour; therefore, as dependent on one Saviour, brethren in one hope, he enjoins mutual love and mutual help, ver. 2. To enforce these considerations he enjoins the duty of self-examination, that each might know how wretched he really was in himself; how mean, how insignificant, both in righteousness and strength, and might learn to prove what was his actual standing in the sight of God. Self-deception would thus be prevented, and the testimony of the Spirit with his spirit that he was a child of God, would be a cause of rejoicing infinitely above all exultation in the praises of others, whom external appearances might easily deceive, ver. 3—5. Further, dreading that their party-spirit had shut up their hearts against the claims of their proper pastors, and that the false teachers who crept in had turned to themselves the maintenance due to others, he enjoins the duty of making provision for the support of the ministry. The solemn declaration which follows, 'Be not deceived, God is not mocked,' &c., may be viewed, like every other such passage, as standing alone, and thus supplying a most extensive ground of practical admonition regarding our whole conduct; but if viewed in reference to the duty of maintaining the ministers of the gospel, must mean, that giving of one's substance for the support of teachers who argue for nothing but external rites and outward purity, a sowing to the flesh, as it betrays the lurking of self-righteousness and spiritual death, can only confirm both, and end in eternal woe; whereas zeal for the spiritual ministrations of Christ's truth, a sowing to the Spirit, a dealing with the heart, must terminate in its enlightenment here, and its eternal life. This care of Christ's ministers would superinduce care of Christ's people, and the heart's attention bestowed on both would speedily return in personal blessings, just as a careful use of the seed time insures an abundant crop.

Ver. 11—18. And here Paul would have concluded his letter; but the subject of it was weighty, and the cause of his discussing it heavy on his heart. Let Christians in Galatia judge how he felt, when they knew that, instead of using an amanuensis, (Rom. xvi. 22; 1 Cor. xvi. 21; Coloss. iv. 18.), as he generally did in writing his epistles, he had, out of his zeal for his deluded brethren, written all with his own hand. This thought turned him once more to the main subject of the letter, and by a few master strokes he sends home his argument and his practical admonitions with irresistible emphasis. The aim of the judaizing teachers was selfish. It was from no desire to promote saving truth, but from a

selfish desire of avoiding persecution; and the proof of this was, that after they had been personally circumcised, and bound to keep the whole law, they were transgressors as others, thus showing that their sole desire was to make proselytes. How different the zeal of the apostle! His glory was in the cross of Christ, which, though a stumbling-block to the Jews, and the scorn and derision of self-conceited Gentiles, was yet the power of God unto salvation to humble believers, who, convinced of the folly of trusting to external rites, would be satisfied with nothing but victory over the world in the renewal of their hearts. After pronouncing his authoritative blessing on all such as walked by this rule, he adds, 'Let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ.' Others might bear the mark of devotedness to Moses, in being circumcised; but as for him, the scourges, the stones, and the fetters of his Jewish countrymen, had left marks that he was not the servant of Moses, but, like Moses, a servant of Christ. His usual benediction closes the epistle.

PRAYER.

Almighty Father, at the close of another day we would bow humbly before thee in the name of Jesus. Blessed be thy name that in him thou art still gracious to us, to sinners. Thou art indeed our Shepherd. Thou restorest our souls. Thou alone healest our backslidings, when thou mightest justly leave us to wander for ever. O Lord, help us to deal kindly with our erring brethren. Give us a spirit of meekness, and humbling remembrance of our past failings, that we may pity our fellow-disciples who fall into transgression, and strive to recover them from the snare of the devil. O Lord, impress our hearts with the arousing truth, that we are still in the body, still surrounded with manifold temptations, still liable to fall into sin. Be thou our strength in the day of trial. Help us, we earnestly beseech thee, to overcome the flesh. Let us not deceive ourselves, as if we could mock and deceive thee, with external professions of regard, while our hearts are not right before thee. O God, give us grace to sow to the Spirit. Implant thine own truth in our hearts, that blessed seed of the word, which produces fruit, both in heart and life, unto holiness, that our end may be life everlasting; and grant that, as we overcome by the blood of the cross and this word of Christ's testimony, so our only glorying may be not in men or in ourselves, but in the cross of Christ. Abounding in all holiness of heart and love to thee, may we also abound in love to our brethren. Help us to do good to the household of faith. Let us seek the peace and prosperity of Zion, and loving her, may we prosper. In due season let us reap, and support us that we faint not. O grant that every dream of

self-righteousness may be dispelled from our hearts, and Christ alone exalted there; and grant that speedily the world may be converted to him. Let thy arm scatter all opposition to his righteous truth, and raise up and send forth to Jews and Gentiles multitudes of faithful ministers and missionaries, who shall spend and be spent for Christ, till his name be great from the rising to the going down of the sun. May we bear about with us in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in our mortal flesh. And thus daily living in Christ, may we die in Christ, and be eternally thine. Blot out in his blood all the offences of the day. Refresh our bodies with rest, our souls with the peace which passeth all understanding, and the glory shall be thine for ever in Christ. Amen.

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CIVIL. 21—43.

REMARKS.

The key to the proper explanation and use of the 107th psalm is found in its closing verse. It is throughout a testimony to God's sovereignty in the kingdom of providence, and a solemn call on every subject of that kingdom, to recognise and acknowledge the hand which wields the sceptre. Having exhorted exiles restored from banishment, and captives delivered from bondage, and the sick and afflicted who have been rescued from death, to acknowledge the grace and kindness of God in their several deliverances, ver. 21—30. he turns to address himself to such voyagers by sea, whether mariners or others, who have been in imminent peril by tempest, yet delivered from a watery grave. The fury of the tempest, and the consternation of the voyagers, are graphically described in this portion of the psalm. But God is declared to be the author of the tempest as well as of the calm. How seldom do seamen remember this. Fixing their every thought on the furious ocean, they dread it, but fear not God. Yet is it at his command that the wind lashes the ocean into fury—even as it is at his command that the wind ceases and the waves subside. How sweet to remember that even in the raging of the sea is he the author, the hearer, and the answerer of prayer. The cry of the distressed enters not in vain into his ear. He delivers them and brings them into their desired haven. Surely a joyful sacrifice of thanksgiving is justly due for such manifest grace. Ver. 31—43. Having discussed such exhibitions of providence as more immediately regard individuals he next adverts to national providences; introducing this portion of the psalm, with the oft repeated call to praise the Lord for his kindness and his wonders.

ful works; and not to confine the expressions of gratitude to individual hearts, but to assemble the congregation, and proclaim it among the rulers, for the dealings of God now to be noticed regard not individuals but nations.

And here he notices various evolutions of Jehovah's providential government. A fruitful and joyous land becomes a wilderness, and while philosophers speculate on the cause, and speak of luxury and effeminacy, producing careless security and its consequent evils, the true cause is God, who has cursed the ground because of the sin of the people. Again a land brought to desolation by famine and poverty, and inhabited by a people on the brink of extermination, gradually rises into fruitfulness and populousness; commerce advances, cities are built, agriculture is pursued, and the philosopher again prates about arts, and science, and industry, and perseverance, and education, and rivalry—all means in the hands of God to produce the prosperity; but he speaks not of God, who alone is the cause. Yea, this flourishing land may again be minished by tyrannical and oppressive rule, and the ambition of a few, or the grasping of one, is fixed on as the cause; but God, in his providence, permits the oppression, and gives power to the oppressor, (Isa. liv. 16; Dan. iv. 17,) in order to inflict chastisement on a nation for national sin; and secure, as may seem, the throne of the tyrant, the very next evolution of providence hurls him from it, a wanderer it may be, in a foreign land, if not a victim to popular rage, while the oppressed are called to rejoice; yea, God's own people praise him for the mercy, and the upholders of oppression, the minions of deposed tyranny, are fain to be silent. In all these things changes in the affairs of individuals and nations, we forget our duty if we fail to discern and acknowledge the hand of God. We are as much called to be students of providence, as of the bible, because when we confine ourselves to either we misunderstand both.

PRAYER.

Father of mercies, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we prostrate ourselves on this the morning of thine own day, at the footstool of thy throne of grace, in the name of Jesus. Help us to praise thee for thy goodness, for thy wonderful works to us the children of men. Blessed be thy name for all the merciful deliverances vouchsafed to us hitherto, and for all the privileges with which we are this morning surrounded. Thou hast often delivered our eyes from tears, our feet from falling, and our souls from death, otherwise we would not now be here thanking thee for thy mercy, and waiting the hour which summons us to thy house of prayer. O Lord, help us to feel our obligations, and to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. Bless, for this purpose, the portion of thy word on which we have this morning meditated; may it deepen our conviction, that thou the most High rulest in the affairs of men and

the nations; and may it encourage us to acknowledge thee in all our ways, that thou mayest direct our steps. O lead us into thy courts with joy. May we see thee there, as thy people have, in times past, seen thy goings in thy sanctuary. All-gracious God, manifest thyself to us in the forgiveness of all our sins, and the complete renewal of our hearts. Show us the Saviour, and quicken us to pant after his image. Satisfy our longing souls with the provision of Zion. Bless that provision to us, and to all our fellow-worshippers. Make thy worship our delight. Assist thy ministering and missionary servants. May thy Holy Spirit give them a mouth and wisdom, adding, this day, many to the redeemed of the Lord, to give thanks for the mercy that endureth for ever. May these be gathered from all lands, but specially may they abound in our own.—And number, we beseech thee, among them, and that speedily, the seed of Jacob. May the Deliverer come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Abraham's seed. Bless our rulers with thy fear; make the sceptre of the land a sceptre of righteousness. O bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end, but establish thou the just, that the righteous may see and rejoice, and all iniquity stop her mouth. Be thou ever gracious to the storm-tossed mariner, and hear his cry in the hour of his distress; and even as thou bringest him to his desired haven, so grant, that, when the voyage of our life is come to a close, we may rest within the veil, where now we desire to cast our anchor, and whither our fore-runner is already entered. Hear us graciously, and answer us in peace, for Jesus sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXVIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CVIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The 108th psalm is, with some slight change in the expressions, a combination of the latter portions of the 57th and 60th. It is a psalm of triumph, and appears to have been composed by David after he perceived that God had established the kingdom in his hand, and delivered him from the fear of all his enemies. When he composed the 57th psalm, he was in imminent danger of falling into the hands of Saul, and though he closes it with triumph, yet he begins it with complaint. In like manner when he composed the 60th, he had to confess that God had showed his people hard things, and had made them to drink the wine of astonishment. But the day of his unmingled triumph had at

length come, and the psalmist wished to record his gratitude and joy in strains of unmingled praise, such as became the mercy conferred on him. Arousing his whole heart to the duty, and feeling there, that God alone was the author of his safety and success, he not only desires that, as an individual, he may set him on high, but prays that he may be acknowledged as the Lord by the whole earth. Then rapidly surveying the land of Israel with the surrounding tribes which he had subdued, he enumerates the fruits of assured triumph, ascribing all to the decree of God. Shechem and Succoth, Gilead and Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah, that is, the whole land conquered by Joshua, and possessed by his fathers, would now own him as king. While he would deal with Shechem and Succoth as if they were his own, assigning them in portions to his friends and defenders, and have all the odours and spicery of Gilead at command, the thousands of Manasseh would fill the ranks of his army, and the ten thousands of Ephraim be his strength in the day of battle. The royal domain would still be Judah, and Jerusalem the seat of government. He would find among the wise men of Judah, able and devoted counsellors and judges, who, in firm execution of the law, would as much defend his kingdom, as did the prowess of his army. Nor would foreign tribes less own his sway. Moab would be reduced to the lowest vassalage, Edom bow to his resistless prowess, and Philistia, the oldest and most inveterate of his enemies, would add to his triumph; yea, the city of Edom, the impregnable Bozra, would be compelled to open its gates to him as a conqueror, for God would go forth with his armies, and in his strength they would do valiantly.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Surely the Lord will bestow on his people a victory as glorious, a conquest as extensive, over sin, satan, and the world, as ever he granted to David over Canaan. Though at first perhaps they may be made to mourn the inroads of evil and the triumph of foes, and amidst many occasions of thanksgiving, be compelled to grieve, that lasting and perfect victory is not theirs; yet, surely that victory will come, for God has decreed it, and he will effect it. Let us be up and doing; 'Through God we shall do valiantly.' Not only shall enemies be kept in abeyance and laid prostrate no more to distress us, but we shall get the whole land in possession. And more than conquerors, we shall reign with Jesus for ever and ever. Let but our hearts be fixed on the victory, and the possession of it will fix our hearts on him who gives it, from henceforth, even for ever.

PRAYER.

O God, we draw near to thee once more this day in the name of Jesus. How precious is a day spent in thy courts. O Lord, we have this day heard anew of thy love in Jesus. We would fix our hearts on thee, and thy saving mercy in the blood of the cross. O Lord, thy mercy is great above the heavens, and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds. Thou hast magnified thy wonderful works of grace toward us miserable sinners, and *challenged the affections of our inmost souls.* O

forbid that we should withhold our heart from thee. O that we could open to him that stands at the door and knocks. Constrain us by thy love to admit the Saviour. Awaken us to yield our whole selves to thy service, and suffer us not to rest satisfied with any thing short of spiritual life, and that in the measure of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. We bless thee, that thou hast promised a glorious and lasting victory to thy people, over all their spiritual foes. We beseech thee to bestow that victory upon us. Give us help, we implore thee, in this our warfare, for vain is the help of man.—We have no strength, our strength is but weakness, even as our righteousness is, in thy sight, but filthy rags. Do thou, then, strengthen and uphold us, with the right hand of thy righteousness. Stretch out thy hand against the wrath of our enemies, and may thy right hand save us. Perfect that which concerneth us, and bring us to thy holy hill, even to thy dwelling-place. We bless thee for a sabbath of rest in our pilgrimage state. We would enjoy it constantly as a pledge of the eternal rest above. O Lord, blot out the sins thou hast discerned in our services this day, and forgive the iniquities of our holy things, and answer our prayers for spiritual mercy, not according to their meanness and want of heart, but according to thy riches in glory by Jesus Christ. Follow, with thy blessing, the word preached, that it may profit them who heard it. O let not this sabbath day pass without many tokens to the efficacy of thy word, and the power of thy grace. Build up thy own people in the faith, and so bless the word that it may arouse sinners, and convert them to Christ. O blessed God, grant that the Son of David may speedily mete out the earth as his own, and establish his rule throughout the whole world. Give to him the throne of his father over the house of Israel. O turn the heart of Abraham's seed to thee, and the heart of all nations to thy own dear Son. Let his enemies be scattered before the light of thy countenance, and his church be established in the whole earth. Into thy hands do we commit this great work; carry it on both in our hearts, and among our fellow-worshippers, in our own land, and in all lands, till all ends of the earth turn unto the Lord, and all kindreds of the nations do thee homage. May the good Lord hasten it in his time. Into thy hands we commend our souls for the coming night. Keep us in peace, refresh us with the sleep of thy beloved, and raise us on the morning of a new day, renewed for thy service. And all we implore is for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXIII.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH XLII.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—4. In a prophecy of so great importance, it is cause of thankfulness that we are not left to vague conjecture either respecting the speaker or the person spoken of. The speaker is Almighty God. He points out the promised Deliverer; and when the Son of God tabernacled here below, he explicitly declared that in himself was this prophecy fulfilled. Though the Son of God, and equal with the Father, to accomplish the great work of redemption he took on himself the form of a servant, and the likeness of man; but he was the chosen servant of God, in whom his soul delighted, whom he upheld, and to whom his Spirit was given without measure. Though he was all meekness, and engaged in no unseemly strife, and was of tender mercy, not breaking the bruised reed, and not quenching the smoking flax; yet with unflinching firmness was he to carry on the work, till Jews and Gentiles were enlightened, and the isles should wait for his law.

Ver. 5—9. Having pointed out the Redeemer to man, the Father addresses him himself. As Creator of the heavens and of the earth, and the giver of breath and immortal spirits to the inhabitants of the earth, he promises to his Son, whom he called in righteousness, that he would hold his hand and keep him. For God's glory, as well as for the salvation of man, was he to be sent forth. Blinded by satan, the inhabitants of the earth, robbing the Lord of his glory, had changed the truth of God into a lie, and had worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. But 'my glory,' says he, 'I will not give unto another, neither my praise to graven images;' and therefore, to destroy the works of satan, to take the prey out of his teeth, and to show forth his own glory in the redemption of perishing man, he sent his eternal Son to enlighten the blind eyes, to break the iron fetters, to bring them that sat in darkness out of the prison house, and to seal by his own blood an everlasting covenant of grace, and mercy, and peace.

Ver. 10—12. Enraptured with the prospect of gospel times, the prophet calls on the inhabitants of the earth to rejoice. A new song was to be sung, for the Lord was to work a new work, more wonderful than the creation of the earth and all its inhabitants. The song of praise for the great salvation was not to rise from God's ancient people only, but from those who had not been a people; from the wandering Arabs; from the ends of the earth; from the isles of the sea; from our own blessed isle, then covered with heathen darkness, and regarded as almost beyond the bounds of the habitable world.

Ver. 13—17. Long left to their own devices, notwithstanding the boasted powers of human intellect, the world by wisdom knew not God. All followed after lying vanities, and satan seemed to reign supreme. But the Lord was at last to make bare his right hand, and to go forth as a mighty man of war, on a work both of judgment and of mercy, showing

mercy in the salvation of those whom he was to lead to repentance, and overwhelming with merited judgments the obstinate enemies of the gospel of his Son.

Ver. 18—23. Then he describes the ungrateful Jews in language applied to them by the Saviour when he tabernacled among them; as seeing, but not observing; opening the ears, but not hearing. And yet to this rebellious people the Lord was to proclaim a message of mercy. He was to declare that for Christ's righteousness sake he was to be well pleased to accept, in the Beloved, returning penitents, beholding them in the face of him, who, by his death on the cross, was to magnify his law and make it honourable, that God might be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. Yet as multitudes would continue deaf to the message of mercy, and unmoved by the most wonderful manifestation of love, he would give Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers; he would pour upon him the fury of his anger; he would set him on fire, yet, though burned, with a sinful stupidity which is to this day exhibited, he would not know it, neither lay it to heart.

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever blessed God, at the footstool of thy throne would we this morning bow ourselves, rendering unto thee that homage which is so due from the rational creatures whom thou hast formed. Thou art exalted indeed above all blessing and praise. Thou art King of kings, and Lord of lords, the great, and wise, and only potentate. Thousands of thousands of holy spirits surround thy throne, saying, Great and marvellous are all thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true art thou in all thy ways, thou King of saints. The most exalted of the heavenly intelligences veil their faces and their feet with their wings in the presence of the Eternal, while they cry out, Halleluia, halleluia, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. With what reverence, then, should the inhabitants of the dust approach thee, crying, Unclean, unclean; Lord, be merciful to us, miserable sinners! And yet, O Lord, polluted though we be, thou hast not shut us out from thy presence; yea, thou hast given us a Mediator, and invited us to approach thee; and coming to thee in his name, we may say, The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, and let the multitudes of the isles be glad. The Lord reigneth, and he reigneth in mercy and in faithfulness; mercy is over all his works. O how wonderfully has thy mercy been manifested to the children of men! When all had sinned, when all had gone astray like lost sheep, when Lebanon was not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereon for a sin-offering, thou didst say, Redeem from going down to destruction, for I have found a ransom. Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth. I have called

him in righteousness; I have given him for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, and to bring them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. And blessed be thy name, this promise which thou gavest thou didst graciously fulfil, for thou didst set forth thy Son as a propitiation for sin, to die the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. O draw us by the bands of love, and by the cords of a man. Draw us, and we will run after thee. May we say, Lord, we are wholly thine. What wilt thou have us to do? What dost thou require us to suffer for thy name's sake? We are thy servants, truly we are thy servants, thou hast loosed our bands. O may this be not only the language of our lips, but the prayer of our heart, and the desire of our souls. May our lives be a song of gratitude and praise to him who loved us, and gave himself for us. May the love of Christ constrain us to live unto him through whose goodness and mercy we live. May we bear about with us the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of the blessed Saviour may be manifested in our mortal bodies. Hasten the happy time when the wilderness shall blossom, when the inhabitant of the rock shall sing, when the most distant isles shall wait for thy law, and when thine ancient people the Jews shall be brought in, with the fullness of the Gentile nations. Hear these our prayers, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXV.

SCRIPTURE—EPHESIANS I.

REMARKS.

Ver. 3—6. As an apostle called and commissioned by God, and now in bonds for the gospel, Paul addresses the saints at Ephesus, i. e. believers sanctified through the Spirit of Christ, and rendered faithful to him as their Master. Though already possessed of grace and peace, he prays for richer supplies as the greatest blessings that could be bestowed on them in this wilderness; and as these spiritual blessings are solicited both from the Father and the Son, we are taught that they are two persons of the one living and true God. For many rich spiritual blessings the apostle raises his grateful acknowledgments to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, his God, as man; his Father, as God and man, and, through Christ, our covenanted God and Father, and the giver of all our blessings. How free as well as rich is the grace of God, for he hath chosen believers in Christ before the foundation of the world, not because he foresaw that they would believe and become holy; but to bless them with faith, and to

render them holy, that all might redound to the praise of the glory of his grace, who made them accepted in the Beloved.

Ver. 7—12. Well may the apostle speak of the richness of grace, when the forgiveness of sins is purchased by the blood of the Son of God, and when he has revealed to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he has purposed in himself, to gather together, in one blessed family in Christ, the ransomed on earth, and the holy angels in heaven. So certain was it that believers were to be raised to glory, that they are spoken of as having obtained the inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of the unchangeable God, that they should be to the praise of his glory.

Ver. 13, 14. But it was not only the Jews, who were the first who believed, that were to be saved, but also the Gentiles, who believed on hearing the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. In proof of this, they had been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, marked and secured as God's jewels. And precious was the sealing of the Spirit of grace, as it gave a foretaste of heaven, and a sure pledge of the purchased possession when at the great day of final retribution, to the praise of his glory, they were to enter on the everlasting inheritance.

Reflecting on the grace God had bestowed, and looking forward with holy joy to the fulfilment of their brightest hopes, the apostle assured them, that by hearing of their faith in Christ, and of their love to his followers, he was encouraged to raise his thanksgivings to God for the blessings he had communicated, and also to raise his supplications to God that he would still grant to them more abundant mercies. That, in particular, as our covenanted God, he would give them brighter and sweeter views of Christ, and increase of experimental acquaintance with him, whom to know is life everlasting; that he would give them livelier hopes, and richer foretastes of the glorious inheritance; that they might further understand his power already experienced, and to be more gloriously displayed when they were raised from the dead, even as their blessed Redeemer had been raised from the dead, and exalted to glory at the right hand of God, far above every name in heaven or on earth, and made the Head over all things to the church for ever and ever.

PRAYER.

We would this evening bow ourselves before the Lord who made us; and may we have grace that we may approach thee acceptably, with reverence and with godly fear, for thou art greatly to be feared in the assemblies of thy saints, and to be had in reverence by all who are about thee. Thou art exalted above our highest thoughts. Who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection? But when the world by wisdom knew not God, thou didst deign to reveal thyself not only as glorious in holiness, but as the Lord merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, through the atoning blood of the Redeemer.

Yea, thou didst so love the world as to give thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life. May we believe unto the saving of our souls. May the love of Christ constrain us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again. May we all be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory. May the work of the Spirit on our hearts give us richer pledges of future felicity, and more delightful earnestness of the happiness of heaven. May we more frequently meditate on our corrupt state by nature, that we may be more convinced of our need of that spiritual Physician, who alone can heal the deadly plague of our hearts. May we more frequently meditate on the merited doom of rebellion, that we may be more thankful that, according to the riches of thy grace, we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, through the blood of Christ. And may we never forget that salvation originates in this glorious grace, that when enabled to lead lives of faith and godliness, we may ascribe unto thee the glory and the praise. Lead us to more frequent meditation on the blessedness of the saints in light, who, with songs of rejoicing, surround thy throne, that we may be ready to say, O that we had the wings of a dove, that we might fly away and be at rest. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; even so come, Lord Jesus. Go forth with the preaching of thy holy word throughout the earth, till the wilderness blossom and the desert rejoice. Bless this family and all our friends. Our hearts' desire and prayer is, that they and we may be saved. Hear the prayers we now raise to thee, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXIV.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH L. LI.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—6. This may be regarded as a prediction of the murmurings of the Jews during the Babylonian captivity, or in latter times, during their long continued dispersion. The Lord condescends to reason with them, and to show that they had no ground of complaint, and had only themselves to blame. 'Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.' If they were still in a state of alienation, it was not

owing to unwillingness on the Lord's part to receive them back, nor to any inability to save them, had they in their distress become humble and penitent. He had called, and they had not answered. He had wrought wonders in behalf of their fathers in Egypt, at the Red sea, in the wilderness, and amidst the swellings of Jordan, and his hand was not shortened that he could not save. Yea, the Redeemer was to show more of his power, and wisdom, and mercy, for he was to suffer, that they might be saved from misery; he was to die, the just for the unjust, that he might bring them to God. 'He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: he hid not his face from shame and spitting.'

Ver. 7—9. Great above all human conception were the trials that awaited him; but with unflinching fortitude he went forward, setting his face like a flint, going forward in divine strength, till he could say, 'It is finished.'

Behold the end of the matter: He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned and destroyed. The righteous may walk in darkness for a time; weeping may continue for a night, but joy will come in the morning. The wicked may walk for a little in their own boasted light, and rejoice in sinful pleasure as sparks of their own kindling; but their joy shall be as the crackling of thorns, and their lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

CHAP. LI. God's people were, in the former chapter, described as those 'who fear the Lord and obey the voice of his servant;' and here they are still further described as those 'who follow after righteousness.' Before, we had obedience as the fruit; here we have the root from which it springs, for they are following after righteousness, seeking salvation through faith in the Lord our righteousness. They might be brought to a low estate; but they may be encouraged by looking at the hole of the pit whence they were digged; and at the low estate of Abraham, whom the Lord called alone, and blessed, and increased; and greater prosperity is here promised to the Jews than they have ever yet attained in their most flourishing condition, ver. 1—3.

Ver. 3, 4. Gospel times were to be ushered in; the righteousness of the Lord was near, and his salvation gone forth; light was to arise not only for the Jews, but for the Gentile nations, to whom the gospel was to proclaim everlasting salvation.

Ver. 5—16. 'Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness.' Here his people, who had been addressed as following after righteousness, are addressed as now knowing righteousness, and as having his law in their hearts; and they are assured that they have no cause of fear, as their enemies are to be consumed as a garment is eaten by the moths. And in full assurance of faith and hope, the believer calls on the Lord, in sublime terms, to awake, and put on his strength, as in the days of old, when he cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon, visiting Egypt with heavy plagues, and humbling and destroying Pharaoh and his host, while a way of escape was miraculously made by the Lord for his people. And greater deliverances are still promised, and shall be fully accomplished.

Ver. 17—23. As the prayer was, 'Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord,' the answer is, 'Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem,' to receive the message of the Lord. Mournful is now thy condition. Desolation by famine, and destruction by the sword, have come unto thee. Who can comfort thee? Who can give thee help? Thy sons have fainted. Rebelliously struggling to escape from merited judgments, they have only added to their wretchedness. Therefore, hear now this, thou afflicted and drunken, but not with wine: 'O what is the Lord now to say? Is he to deal with them according to their sins, and to pass the irrevocable sentence of condemnation? Hear, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth! it is a message of peace and mercy:—'Thus saith the Lord,' &c., ver. 21—23.

PRAYER.

Almighty Creator of all things, with reverence and contrition we would present ourselves before thee. How shall we, who are sinful dust and ashes, present ourselves before the Lord, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity without abhorrence? We have sinned, and what can we answer? we have sold ourselves for nought, and our iniquities, as the wind, have carried us away. We have encompassed ourselves with sparks; we have walked in the light of our own fire, and in the sparks of our own kindling; and hadst thou left us to ourselves, our light would have been put out in utter darkness, and our fire would have been the unquenchable burnings of hell. But O Lord, when our iniquities had brought us low; when we were laden with pollution; when we deserved to lie down in everlasting sorrow; when thou sawest us in our blood, thou didst behold us with compassion; yea, when we were in our blood, thou didst say unto us, Live, and the time was a time of love. Thou didst seal thy covenant of grace with redeeming blood. Thou didst send a Saviour. He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and hid not his face from shame and spitting. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; he died that we might live. O may we, then, love and fear the Lord and his goodness, and obey the voice of the heavenly Saviour. May we know righteousness, and walk in the light of the Lord's countenance. And if at any time we walk in darkness and see no light, may we trust in the Lord, and stay ourselves on the most high God. When we remember the years of the right hand of the Most High, in difficulties and dangers we will say, Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days, the generation of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it that hath dried the sea, the waters of the great

deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? O Lord, may we be under thy kind care and keeping; covered as in the hollow of thy hand; guarded as the apple of thine eye. O remember us in the multitude of thy tender mercies. May we avail ourselves of our gospel privileges, and go on from strength to strength, till every one of us appear in Zion. O Lord, bless the church of Christ on earth. For Zion's sake we will not hold our peace, and for Jerusalem's sake we will not rest, till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. Say at last, Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, that thou mayest be for a name and a praise, and that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of God. Bless us and all whom we are bound to have upon our spirits. Hear the prayers we now raise to thee for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LVI.

SCRIPTURE—EPHESIANS II.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. Mournful had been the state of the Ephesians. They had been spiritually dead. Their whole conduct gave proof of their spiritual deadness; for walking according to the course of this world, they walked also according to the power of the prince of the air, even of satan, called the Prince of the Air, because of the power he is allowed to exercise in the airy regions, that he may more successfully work in his willing slaves, the children of disobedience.

Ver. 3. And this mournful state was not the condition of the Gentiles only, but also of the Jews, till they were turned from darkness to light, from the power of satan to the living God. Before they were converted, they fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Ver. 4. Having set forth their miserable state by nature, and shown that, whether Jews or Gentiles, they were the children of disobedience, and, consequently, the children of wrath, he shows whence their help came. It came from God, against whom they were in rebellion, 'God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved them, quickened them together with Christ.'

Ver. 5—7. And not only does he raise believers from the death of sin, but brings them into a state of favour; and having brought them into a state of grace, he will also raise them to a state of glory, making them sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And what he has done for them, he is both able and willing to do for others, who are thus led

to repentance, by being shown the exceeding riches of his grace.

Ver. 8—10. This leads the apostle very explicitly to declare, that their salvation, from first to last, was owing to the free grace of God; that he begins the work and carries it on; that their good works are not the cause of their salvation, but the effects of a work of grace begun in the heart. But lest any should think that, since it is of grace, there is no need of good works, he declares that, as God's workmanship, they were created anew in Christ Jesus to good works, that they should walk therein.

Ver. 11—18. He again calls on them to remember the state from which they were delivered, when they were without God, and without Christ, and without hope in the world; and also the blessed state to which they were raised, when they who were far off had been made nigh by the blood of Christ; and when by him, who is our peace, Jews and Gentiles had been reconciled, and brought into one fold, under the care of the good Shepherd; that through him they both might have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, thus co-operating in their salvation.

The chapter commenced with their being dead in trespasses and sins, the slaves of Satan, the children of disobedience and of wrath. But behold the blessed change, they are now fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. In expressive figures the apostle sets forth their happiness, as a city, as the household of God, as a holy building or temple; and this temple, composed of believers, of which Christ is the foundation, he describes as increasing in numbers, and growing in grace, for a habitation of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER.

O thou who dwellest in the heavens, King eternal, immortal, and invisible, with reverence and humility would we this evening bow ourselves before thee. Thou dwellest in light inaccessible and full of glory. Myriads of holy spirits are around thy throne, delighting to celebrate thy praise, and rejoicing to do thy will. What is man that thou shouldst be mindful of him, or the children of men that thou shouldst deign to visit them. Thou didst indeed create man very good, and didst delight in the work of thy hands; but man being in honour abode not; he rebelled against the God who made him; he became sinful himself, and entailed corruption and woe on all his posterity. We had all gone astray like lost sheep; we had all walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, sent his Son to quicken us, that we who were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the

covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, might be reconciled in the body of Christ's flesh, through death; and though once far off, might be made nigh by the blood of Christ, having, through him, access by the Holy Spirit unto the Father, that we may be presented holy, and unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight, with exceeding joy. O may it be our joyful experience that Christ has become our peace, and that by the cross he has slain the enmity, and has enabled us to come unto God as children to a Father, who is both able and willing to help us. Meditating much on the wonders of redeeming love, may we say, We are not our own, but bought with a price, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; therefore will we glorify thee in our bodies and in our spirits, as we are wholly thine. May we remember that by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast; and may we show that, as believers, we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, that we should walk therein; and may our lives be a song of gratitude and praise to him who loved us, and gave himself for us. Bless our brethren of mankind. Have mercy on those who are yet fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. May they be led to see that the end of these things is death; and when roused to a sense of their guilt and their danger, they cry, What shall we do to be saved? lead them to him who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Lead them to flee to him as the stronghold; and may they find that he is a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm. Bless this family and household, and all our friends. May we all be of the household of God, built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. Hear our prayers, and grant an answer in peace, for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXV.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH LII. LIII.

REMARKS.

CHAP. LII. This chapter refers to the deliverance of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity; but it must be understood also, as pointing to more spiritual and more interesting events, namely, the restoration

of the Jews to the church, and the deliverance of the Gentiles from ignorance and idolatry, by the gospel of the Son of God. Ver. 13—16. These verses properly belong to the next chapter. Behold the blessed Redeemer in the depth of his humiliation, the height of his exaltation, and the glorious success of his cause among the nations of the earth. May the opposition of kings and of people give way to the reception of his gospel in love; may the nations be sprinkled with his atoning blood and purifying Spirit, that they may see and understand the things which belong to their everlasting peace.

CHAP. LIII. This is one of the most important chapters in all the prophetic writings. It is so full, so plain, so rich, so minute and circumstantial, in all that relates to the person, character, and office of Christ, that it might rather be taken for a history of past events than a prophecy of things to come. Well might the eunuch ask Philip, Acts viii. 34, 'I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet thus? of himself, or of some other man?' The ancient Jews admitted that the whole chapter related to the Messiah; but since the Messiah has come, and the prophecy, to the very letter, been fulfilled in him, they interpret it as referring to themselves, and the judgments inflicted upon their nation by the Romans. Alas! the veil is still upon their hearts, but when they shall be turned to the Lord, it shall be taken away, and this chapter will then perhaps become the principal source of conviction to the whole nation. We have, 1. The prediction of the unbelief of the Jewish nation. Ver. 1. The Jews looked for a Messiah clothed with temporal power and authority, and hence they despised the poor and lowly Jesus of Nazareth, saying, 'Is not this the carpenter's son?' Let not pride and prejudice blind our minds to the importance of the gospel report, but let us account it 'a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' 2. From ver. 2—9. We have an account of the low condition, undeserved contempt, and extreme sufferings of the Saviour. How mean his external appearance! 'as a root out of a dry ground,' &c. His parentage obscure, his circumstances poor, his companions illiterate, humble fishermen. How deep his sorrow and sufferings! 'A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' 'My soul,' said he, 'is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,' Luke xxii. 42—44. How great the contempt with which he was treated! 'He was despised, and we esteemed him not.' How injurious the opinion formed of his sufferings! 'We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted,' as one justly punished for his own offences. How great his love! 'All we like sheep had gone astray, and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.' How patient and meek in the midst of his sufferings! 'He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth,' Matt. xxvi. 67, 68. How iniquitous his sentence! 'He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.' How efficacious his death! 'With his stripes we are healed.' Ponder, O my soul, on the sufferings of thy Saviour, and remember these were all borne for thee. Ever plead the atonement of his *ath.* 'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable

gift.' We have, lastly, the glory consequent upon the sufferings of Christ. Ver. 10—12. 'He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.' How remarkable the expression! What an inexpressible dignity does this consideration confer on the redemption of man! Let us seek, by penitent and obedient lives, to add to that delight which the Saviour experiences in contemplating the trophies of his victory, the purchase of his blood, the monuments of his grace. And having ourselves tasted that the Lord is gracious, may we cheerfully embrace every opportunity to extend the knowledge of his gospel throughout the world.

PRAYER.

Our Father who art in heaven, we thine unworthy creatures, thy rebellious children, would this morning bow before thee, to thank and to bless thy holy name for all thy goodness and mercy towards us. Thou causest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice over us; thou fillest our mouths with food and our hearts with gladness, and by the visitation of thy Spirit are our lives preserved. We bless thee especially for that rich provision which thou hast made for our spiritual wants in the gospel of thy Son, in that we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace. We rejoice that thou didst so love our world as to give thine only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Herein indeed is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and gave his Son to die for us. O may we ever join trembling with our mirth, knowing this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men love the darkness rather than the light. But may the consideration of thy great love to us in the gift of thy Son constrain us to live no longer to ourselves, but to him that died for us and rose again. Truly, all we like sheep had gone astray, we had turned every one to his own way, and thou didst lay on him the iniquity of us all. We bless thee that the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and that with his stripes we are healed. Grant that whilst we contemplate the sufferings of the Son of God, endured on our behalf, our hearts may be melted into contrition and love. May we see in these sufferings the exceeding demerit of sin, and be led to hate it perfectly, and to shun every appearance of evil. May we learn in the price paid for our redemption, something of the worth of the soul and the weight of eternity, that we may be led with truly penitent hearts and humbled minds to lay hold on the hope set before us in the gospel, that Christ may be formed in our hearts the hope of glory; that in us he may see of the travail of his soul and be

satisfied; that being delivered out of the hand of all our spiritual enemies, we may serve thee without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives. And, O Lord our God, whilst we desire an interest in all the blessings of salvation for ourselves, we pray that thy saving health may be made known to all the nations of the earth. Extend the bounds of our Redeemer's kingdom. Build up the waste places in Zion. Increase the number of faithful ministers, and grant them an abundant supply of the spirit of wisdom and love. Make bare thy holy arm, that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God. We thank thee, O God, for thy care of us last night, and for the health and comforts of this morning. Give us this day our daily bread, preserve us from all evil, keep us back from all sin, and lead us in the way everlasting. In mercy visit the sick and the dying, comfort the mourner, be gracious to all who are dear to us, and bless all for whom we should pray. And now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and unto the Father and ever blessed Spirit, be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM xcvi. 1.

SCRIPTURE—EPHESIANS iii.

REMARKS.

1. This chapter consists of two parts. The first, from ver. 1—13, inclusive, in which the apostle notices his own appointment by God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and the discovery of the mystery of their calling into the Christian church. The second, from ver. 14—21, contains a most devout and affectionate prayer by the apostle for the Ephesian converts.

Paul was now a prisoner at Rome, in the cause of Christ, and for the sake of the Gentiles. The calling of the Gentiles is here styled a mystery. How thankful ought we to be for the discovery of the knowledge of this mystery, yea, and of a greater mystery, God manifested in the flesh. The revelation of this mystery was made to the apostle by the Spirit. Note. All thorough and saving knowledge of the things of God must be taught us by his own Spirit. Ver. 2, 7, 8. Paul was called directly by the Lord himself to the office of the ministry, (Acts ix.) and by the effectual working of his power was he made a new man, and duly qualified for that important service. How wonderful the triumphs of divine grace!

Ver. 10, 11. How great must have been the admiration of the angelic hosts when they beheld the eternal purposes and manifold wisdom of God clearly

discovered in the full developement of the plan of man's redemption. Ver. 12. Christ is the way unto God, both of access and of acceptance, and faith in him expels all servile fear, so that we can come with the humble confidence of children unto a father. Ver. 13. It is an honour to suffer for Christ, 1 Peter iv. 16.

2. Ver. 14—19. In this prayer notice, (1.) The posture of the apostle. In drawing nigh unto God in prayer, if the heart be filled with a sense of his awful majesty, the outward behaviour will always be becoming, humble, and reverent. Observe, (2.) The title by which he addresses God,—the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Observe, (3.) The subject of his prayer, which is, *First*, ver. 16. The Spirit of God is the source of all strength in the Christian. Faith, love, and hope, all the graces of the Christian life, are wrought in the renewed soul by his operations, according to his unbounded fullness of power, wisdom and mercy. God's goodness is his glory, Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. *Second*, ver. 17. When the Spirit has wrought a conviction of the infinite importance of Christ to the soul, and impressed the heart with a clear and lively apprehension of him, in his glorious person, infinite love, and atoning death, then is Christ enthroned in the heart, a constant dependence is placed on his merit and promises, his word is studied, his commandments obeyed, and the disposals of his providence cheerfully submitted to. *Third*, latter clause of ver. 17—19. 1. Unless we be fixed in our love to God, our Saviour, and to one another, we shall neither be steadfast and immovable, nor abound in the work of the Lord. If we be not 'rooted and grounded in love,' we shall become unstable as water and can never prevail. But 2. and chiefly, The mystery of redeeming love is known in some measure and degree by all saints, and the more our hearts are brought under the influence of faith and love, the better able shall we be more clearly to understand it, and more firmly to believe it. Lastly, the apostle concludes with an ascription of praise unto God, ver. 20, 21. Mark the representation which he here gives of God, as not only able to do all that he had asked, but 'above all,' yea, 'exceeding abundantly above all he could ask or think.' 'The stores of God's grace and mercy are inexhaustible,' James i. 5; Psalm lxxxi. 10.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, we adore thee as the Father of our spirits and the framer of our bodies, the source of all our blessings and the foundation of all our hopes. We rejoice that ever thou didst proclaim thy name to be the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. We bless thee that thou didst lay our help upon One who is mighty, and that when the fullness of the time was come thou didst send forth thy Son, made under the law, to redeem us from its curse. This is indeed a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to

save sinners, even the chief. We bless thee for all that he did, and taught, and suffered, while he remained upon earth, for the words of salvation which flowed from his lips, and for the atoning sacrifice which he offered for sin by his death upon the cross. We thank thee for the gracious commission given to his apostles, to preach the gospel to every creature; that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, unto all who believe. We thank thee that to us has the word of this salvation come. O grant that we may feel all its transforming energy and power upon our hearts and lives; that being delivered from all ignorance, and error, and sin, we may be unto the Lord for a peculiar people, zealous of good works; that having in us the hope which the gospel inspires, we may rise superior to all the trials and temptations of life, and purify ourselves even as thou art pure. For this cause would we bow the knee unto thee the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou didst grant us, according to thy riches in glory, to be strengthened with all might by thy Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, that being rooted and grounded in love we may be able to comprehend with all saints the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and to be filled with the fullness of God. Give us much of that faith which worketh by love, purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world, that we may walk by faith and not by sight, that the lives which we now lead in the flesh may be by the faith of the Son of God. Shed abroad abundantly thy love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and teach us to love thee, the Lord our God, supremely, and each other with true hearts fervently. Clothe us with humility, and give us the meek and quiet spirit which in thy sight is of great price. We thank thee, heavenly Father, for thy care of us during the past day, for the supply of our wants, and the protection of thy kind providence. We commit ourselves this night to thy care and keeping. Spread the curtain of thy providence around our dwelling, and let no evil come nigh to us. Bless our family and dwell in it. May each member of it be a subject of thy renewing grace, and an heir of life eternal. Bless all our friends. Supply the wants of thine own people. Dwell in the families of all who call upon thy name, and greatly increase the number of them that fear thee. And now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXX. 4.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH LIV. LV.

REMARKS.

CHAP. LIV. The prophet having, in the preceding chapter, spoken of the humiliation, sufferings, and death of Christ, and the consequent glory and blessed fruits which would result therefrom, proceeds now to foreshow more fully the great enlargement, prosperity, and security of the church under the Christian dispensation. Ver. 1—4. The church, represented here under the character of a married woman who had long been without children, is called upon to break forth into singing, and to enlarge greatly the bounds of her habitation, on account of the numerous offspring which should be born into her family. Great blessings and privileges are promised to her children, though she had departed from the Lord.

CHAP. LV. ver. 1—8. How rich and free are the invitations of the gospel! Under the emblems of water, wine, and milk, are the blessings of salvation offered to all—to all who thirst, that is, to all who vehemently and ardently seek after them. Thirst is a very painful sensation; and when a man has been thoroughly awakened to a sense of his real character and state before God, then will he be forced to cry out, What shall I do to be saved? who shall deliver me from the wrath to come? Then will he be disposed to hearken diligently to the message of the gospel, and joyfully to embrace its salvation. The emblems here employed are striking and instructive. Water is fertilizing, cleansing, necessary to life, and suited to men of all countries and climes. The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin, his Spirit quickens and sanctifies the soul, and renders it fruitful in every good word and work; his gospel is glad tidings of great joy to all nations, and its blessings are adapted to the exigencies of the whole human race. Lord, evermore give us this water, that we thirst not. Wine and milk refresh, and nourish, and strengthen, and comfort the body; and the precious promises of the gospel, the gracious communications of God's Spirit, refresh the soul during its journey through the wilderness, strengthen it for duty, comfort it under trials, and nourish it up till it comes to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. May we by a believing application of the grace of the gospel to ourselves, secure an interest in these blessings. Note. All who pursue unlawful pleasures; all who pursue lawful objects, whilst they forget things unseen and eternal; all who maintain a form of godliness, but remain strangers to its power; all who are seeking happiness in the creature, and not in the Creator, may justly be said to spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not. How great is the number, how extreme the folly and danger of all such! Ver. 6, 7. Mark, 1. Our duty. We must seek the Lord by fervent, persevering, believing prayer; by repentance and reformation, both of heart and of life; by returning unto the Lord from whom we have deeply revolted. 2. The motives presented, (1.) Of terror and alarm. The words in the

8th verse represent God in the attitude of one withdrawing himself from us. 'While he may be found,' while he is near,' evidently imply that he will not always be found, will not always be near. Short as the life of man is, his day of salvation is sometimes shorter. This was the case with many of the Jews in the days of our Saviour, as appears from his own language, Matt. xiii. 15; Luke xix. 42. God will not withhold pardon from returning penitents, how numerous or aggravated soever their transgressions may have been; but sinners may so completely silence the remonstrances of conscience, and extinguish every religious feeling, as to render their salvation impossible, without God's departing from the ordinary means which he employs to save them, Hosea iv. 17. O Lord, keep our hearts soft, and our consciences tender, and ever teach us to do thy will. (2.) Of encouragement. He will have mercy upon us and abundantly pardon. The goodness of God should lead us to repentance, Ezek. xviii. 32. Ver. 8—13. It is matter for constant gratitude that God's thoughts and ways are not as ours. He deals not with us as we would with one another, but manifests long-suffering and forbearance, Psalm ciii. 11. The preaching of the gospel, making known God's promises and purposes towards our fallen race, is his own ordinance, and we ought to rejoice that his word is pledged, that in defiance of all opposition it shall prosper and prevail. Let us ever seek to feel its power upon our hearts and lives, that we may be unto God for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory.

PRAYER.

Father of peace and God of love, it well becomes us to show forth thy praises every morning, and to speak of thy faithfulness every night. For thou art good unto all, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works. It is because thy good hand has been upon us that we have been preserved even until now. Thou hast kept our eyes from tears, our feet from falling, and our souls from death. O enable us to walk before thee in the land of the living. Teach us to feel our dependence on thee for life, and breath, and all things, to know the obligations under which we lie to serve thee, and ever to remember our accountableness unto thee our judge. O Lord, we confess our sins and shortcomings in thy sight; thou knowest all our sins, all our foolishness is before thee. O deal not with us as we have sinned against thee; reward us not according to our deserts, but in the midst of deserved wrath remember us in mercy. Show us thy mercy and grant us thy salvation, love us with that love which thou bearest unto thine own, and let no iniquity ever have dominion over us. May our sins be all washed away in the blood of atonement, and may we have the new heart and the right spirit given to us, that henceforth we may no more go back, but keep

thy precepts continually. Too long, alas! have we spent our money for that which was not bread, and laboured for that which satisfied not. We have set our affections upon the creature more than upon thee the Creator, but now would we desire to return unto thee, now would we forsake all our sinful ways and unrighteous thoughts. Do thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us. Pour out upon us a spirit of grace and of supplication, that we may seek thy face with our whole heart. Work in us that repentance which needeth not to be repented of, that henceforth we may keep ourselves unspotted from the world, and shun every appearance of evil. Yea, work in us all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power, that our fruit may be unto holiness, and the end life everlasting. Lord, make us to know our end, and the measure of our days what it is, that we may know how frail we are. Give us to believe more truly the reality of things unseen and eternal, to feel their importance more deeply, and to live more constantly under their influence. Enable us to lead the life of the righteous, that our last end may be as his. We thank thee for thy care of us during the last night; we have lain down and slept, and have again awakened, because thine arm sustained us. Preserve us this day in thy fear, guide us in the path of duty, of purity, and of peace. Bless the people among whom we dwell; preside over us, and prosper thine own cause in the midst of us. Let thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven. Take away all our sins, and hear our prayers, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXVIII. 18.

SCRIPTURE—EPHESIANS IV.

REMARKS.

In this chapter, we have, First, Some very affectionate exhortations, and some weighty motives presented, to Christian unity, peace and concord. The apostle exhorts, 1. Generally, to a becoming Christian walk. Ver. 1. The promises and prospects to which Christians are called by the gospel, require of them a corresponding temper and conduct. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' 2. And more particularly, to cultivate those dispositions by which love and harmony can alone be maintained. Ver. 2, 3. Lowliness of mind will lead us to esteem others better than ourselves, and guard us against pride, by which cometh contention. Meekness will dispose us to be careful not to offend others, and

not to be easily offended ourselves. 'Long-suffering and forbearance in love.' How opposite is this to the spirit of the world! Man is naturally a resentful being, Titus iii. 2. But the gospel inculcates a different spirit, and where its power is felt there is that disposition of love which leads to the patient bearing of injuries, and which prompts us to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us. 'The fruit of the Spirit is love.' May he ever fill our hearts with that charity which is the bond of perfectness. Motives to unity. Ver. 4—6. In these important particulars all true Christians are in reality united, and ought they not to live together in love and peace? How much would Christianity be recommended to the world were its professors of one mind and of one heart! And how trifling and unimportant will many of those things be found at last, when the days of ignorance and imperfection are over, which now keep those asunder who are one in the great essentials of salvation! Ver. 7—16. The grand end of that variety of gifts and graces which the great Head of the church had bestowed upon its members, was designed to promote this very object, 'to perfect the saints, to edify the body of Christ,' that is, the church, 'till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of Christ, unto a perfect man.' Note, ver. 8. When Christ ascended up on high he ascended as a triumphant conqueror. 'I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.' Learn, (v. 14.) the necessity of being well-grounded in the knowledge of the great doctrines of the gospel—of holding fast the profession of faith without wavering—of being established in the truth.

We have, Second, Exhortations to holiness, and purity of heart and life, to the renunciation of the old and the putting on the new man, to guard against every thing that would be displeasing to the Spirit of God. Let us cultivate the tender and forgiving Spirit exhibited to ourselves by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit cannot suffer grief as we do; the expression is used merely to suit our apprehension and capacities, and means that we should not conduct ourselves in such a manner as might justly give him offence, as might, humanly speaking, furnish him with a cause of grief. Let us take care that we despise not his admonitions, that we turn not a deaf ear to his friendly voice, that especially we guard against the sins enumerated and forbidden in this chapter, as lying, stealing, anger, corrupt communication, bitterness, evil-speaking, and malice.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, to whom can we go but unto thee, thou hast the words of eternal life, thou art the God of salvation? Thou art good, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works; we are the living monuments of thy sparing mercy. For iniquities we confess prevail against us, do thou blot out all our transgressions. Hide thy face from our sins, and give us to know the blessedness of the man whom thou

choosest and causest to approach unto thee. We bless thee that thou hast no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but rather that all should turn unto thee and live. Turn us, O Lord, and we shall be turned; draw us, and we shall run after thee; heal us, and we shall be healed; save thou us, and we shall be saved. For the sake of thy dear Son who died for our sins, do thou heal all our backslidings, receive us graciously and love us freely. We rejoice that he died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. We bless thee for the hopes and promises of the gospel. We rejoice that life and immortality have now clearly been brought to light, that thou hast made known to us the way everlasting. O teach and enable us to improve diligently the means of grace with which we are so highly favoured, remembering to whom much is given, of them much shall be required. May we be enabled to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called; to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by a life and conversation becoming the gospel; so to conduct ourselves at all times and in all circumstances, that we may not grieve thy Holy Spirit, by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption. God of all grace, do thou shed down thy Holy Spirit upon our hearts in rich abundance, to inspire us with a hatred of every thing that is displeasing to thee, and to form us to a love of universal goodness, and a desire to make continual advancements in it. For this end, bless to us those religious services in which as a family we engage. May we wait upon thee in them with prepared hearts, that we may be acceptable worshippers in thy sight. Enable us to hear thy word with due attention, open our minds to all the instructions which we receive from it, and bow our hearts to humble obedience. By thy grace may we ever be enabled to show mercy and speak truth, to do righteousness and to follow peace. Fill us with all kind and charitable dispositions towards each other, and let the peace of God rule in our hearts. May we ever keep our tongue from evil and our lips from speaking guile. And may the very God of peace himself sanctify us wholly; and we pray God that our whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus. We pray for the advancement of the gospel in the world, and for the conversion of Jews and Gentiles. May those places of the earth which are still the abodes of horrid cruelty, be speedily visited with the peace-giving life-inspiring influences of the Sun of righteousness. And, O God of love and mercy, do thou

spread among Christians of every profession a spirit of forbearance, and candour, and love, that all may endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Be favourable to our beloved land. Bless our friends and give them an interest in the salvation of Christ. Look in mercy upon the sick, and sanctify affliction to them. Visit the dying to save them, and teach us to remember the shortness of time and the awful importance of eternity. Bless the young with teachable minds and sanctified hearts, that they may remember thee their Creator. Watch over us this night. May we lie down impressed with a sense of thy goodness, may we awake in thy fear, enjoying thy favour, and rise with renewed strength to discharge the duties of life and with more confirmed resolutions to run the way of thy commandments. Hear our prayer, forgive our sins, sanctify our nature and save our souls, for our Redeemer's sake, thy Son. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRaise—PSALM XIV.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH LIX.

REMARKS.

What a sad picture of our natural depravity does this chapter exhibit! Even the nation most highly favoured of heaven, and in the days of such a prophet as Isaiah, is conspicuous for every species of daring and hateful crime! But how awful is the accumulation of national guilt also, even in our own enlightened and privileged land! The description here given of the impiety and degeneracy of Israel is too faithfully realized in this Christian country. 'None calleth for justice, nor pleadeth for truth; they trust in vanity and speak lies; they conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity. Judgment is turned away backward and justice standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.' In public and in private, among rulers and ruled, there is a deplorable laxity of right and high-toned principle. Not the glory of God or the love of righteousness, but carnal expediency and selfish ambition, are the prevailing motives by which men are actuated. And vast multitudes have openly cast off all fear of God, and walk after the counsel of their own wicked hearts, indulging without remorse in every bad passion, and perpetrating the most horrid crimes, so unavailing are the greatest external advantages in checking the progress of vice, or in restraining the native wickedness of the human heart, out of which proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, blasphemies. Let us bewail then the sin of our nature—let us mourn over the guilt of our country—let us confess with deep contrition our own personal pollution and multiplied offences.

But let us meditate for a moment on sin's awful consequences. It has occasioned a rupture betwixt heaven and earth. It has rendered God the enemy of man, and man the enemy of his own happiness. It has separated the creature from the Creator, and caused the Almighty to hide his face in anger from our fallen and miserable race! And the worst feature of our apostacy, as well as the strongest proof of it, is our strange unwillingness to be cured. We love our sins so well, and have such a rooted aversion to holiness, that we wish to be let alone in our carnal pursuits and indulgencies, and would rather die cleaving to them than be turned from our iniquities and live. But let none say that there is any want either of power or will on the part of God to save them, while their own consciences tell them that they are attached to the ways of sin. For although it is only through faith in the righteousness of Christ that we can obtain a title to the blessings of salvation, yet personal holiness is one of those blessings, and is an indispensable qualification for heaven. The love of sin must be eradicated from our hearts, and the love of righteousness implanted in them, before we can enjoy the divine friendship. And whatever our privileges or professions may be, or however multiplied our sacrifices or our prayers, the Lord will not hear us, but will hide his face from us, if we regard iniquity in our hearts.

Yet it is a consoling truth to the church and to every humble and right-hearted Christian, that times of sad declension and abounding iniquity shall be succeeded by seasons of revival. Although spiritual religion may be reduced to a low ebb, and the love of many may wax cold, and profligacy and crime may become general and daring, although the enemies of God may muster their forces, and threaten like a mighty inundation, to overwhelm and bear down every remaining land mark of pure religion and undefiled, yet the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against them, and utterly defeat and scatter their wicked imaginations. They may hatch cockatrice (or serpent's) eggs—they may plot mischief and propagate poisonous error, by which, alas! many souls may be corrupted and ruined. But their counsels shall come to nought, and they shall fall into their own snare. Wickedness shall not always prosper, truth shall ultimately triumph over all iniquity. When the divine Redeemer shall come in the power of his kingdom, he shall purify his church and destroy his enemies. His gospel shall be preached from one generation to another, and his Spirit shall not fail to accompany it with demonstration and power, and to render it effectual for enlightening and reforming the nations, till all the kingdoms of this once rebellious world shall become the one blessed and obedient kingdom of Messiah!

PRAYER.

O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping covenant and mercy to them that love thee, and to them that keep thy commandments, we are ashamed and blush to lift up our faces before thee, for we have sinned and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy pre-

cepts and thy judgments. Our sins, alas, have separated us from thy favour, and exposed us to thy dreadful wrath. And we are so blind and infatuated as to love our iniquities and go after our idols, forsaking thee the living God, the fountain of living waters, the source of all spiritual life, and light, and joy. We have all gone astray like lost sheep, we have turned aside every one unto his own way, and the way of peace we have not known. And our sins are deeply aggravated by the peculiar favour thou hast shown us. We have abused our high privileges, we have despised our own mercies, we have neglected the warning voice of thy word, we have resisted the striving of thy Spirit with our hearts. Surely our wound is incurable, we have refused to be healed. Yet to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him. Thy hand is not shortened that it cannot save. But we have reason to lament our own perverseness in cleaving to our sins, and our own aversion to apply for the precious blessings of thy grace. O turn us therefore and we shall be turned. Grant us a deep and affecting sense of our own depravity and blindness, of our own guilt and folly in being so backward to avail ourselves of the new and living way by which we have access to thy favour. Turn us effectually both from the love and practice of iniquity. And cherish in our hearts every holy principle and devout affection, that we may serve thee the Lord our God in newness of life, imitating the perfect and blessed example of our divine Redeemer. But we have reason to bewail before thee, not only our own personal corruption and guilt, but our barren and unfruitful condition as a church of Christ, and our woeful degeneracy as a Christian nation. We have provoked thee to anger by our sins, and exposed ourselves to thy just and awful judgments. O Lord, we humbly deprecate thy wrath against our sinful land. Deprive us not of our privileges, but give us grace to improve them better. Cut us not down as cumberers of the ground, but in mercy prolong our space for repentance, and send us times of revival and times of refreshing from thy presence. In the midst of wrath remember mercy. Let not the wickedness of the wicked prosper. Lift up a standard against the enemies of piety and righteousness, and arrest the progress of sin. Heal the backslidings of thy people, and all the unseemly divisions of the church. Give greater efficacy to the ministrations of thy servants and to the word of thy grace, that sinners may be converted unto thee, and all thy people edified and built

up in love. And may our own souls prosper and be in health before thee. May we be interested in the great salvation, and being justified through the blood of Jesus, may we share in the blessed triumph and coming glory of his kingdom. Pardon our many offences and direct our steps this day in thy ways. And hear us for our Saviour's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLIII. 3.

SCRIPTURE—EPHESIANS V.

REMARKS.

Christian practice is based upon Christian doctrine. We must be well instructed in the great principles of the gospel, and in all its high and holy mysteries, to prepare us for serving God aright. The violation of the law rendered the gospel necessary, and it is now through the gospel alone that we can learn how to keep the law. It furnishes us with motives to obedience which can be derived from no other source. The peculiar doctrines of the gospel, therefore, must be constantly affirmed and illustrated, in order that they who believe in God may clearly see the reasons why they should be careful to maintain good works. It was accordingly the uniform method of the apostles to lay the foundation in doctrine, on which the superstructure of holiness was to be reared. And there is no other method that will ever prove effectual. To imagine that the grace of God which bringeth salvation can ever tend to licentiousness of practice, is to betray an utter misconception of its real nature and of the whole plan of redemption. We are not saved by our works, but we work because we are saved. Salvation is by grace, and a sense of obligation for the free gift of so unspeakable a benefit, attaches the pardoned and accepted sinner to the service of him who has bestowed it. So that without faith, by which the blessings of salvation are realized and appropriated (and faith implies knowledge of the doctrine) it is impossible to please God.

But how sublime is the believer's pattern! He is called to be a follower of God himself—to imitate the divine character—to aim at being perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect. And the love of Christ, 'who hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice unto God,' is proposed as the motive by which we should be influenced in aspiring to this exalted standard! The divine conduct is exhibited in the ways of his providence, and in the plans of his grace, to the children of men. It is reflected both from his works and from his word. His law is the transcript of his moral perfections, and the principles of that law are embodied in the bright and spotless example of 'God manifest in the flesh.' Here then are not only abstract rules given, but a living and glorious pattern is set before our eyes. If we keep our attention fixed then on this exalted

pattern, and are actuated by the love of Christ, how can we have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness? How can we indulge in vile affections, in impurity, or in covetousness, which is idolatry? How can we be partakers with the children of disobedience? We are no longer in darkness, but are now light in the Lord, and must walk as children of the light, and reprove the works of darkness, by the holiness of our example. If we are raised from the death of sin, and Christ hath given us light, we must walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, living to the glory of God, and preparing for a blessed eternity. We must shun intemperance and every carnal excess, and seek to be filled with the Spirit. We must be devout and humble, walking with God and delighting in spiritual exercises. We must not only regulate our outward behaviour, but our speech and our hearts also, by the precepts of the gospel, living 'as becometh saints,' and rising superior alike to the practice, and to the ridicule of an ignorant and ungodly world. For otherwise, we are mistaking the tendency of the gospel, and allowing ourselves to be deceived with vain words. Although we are not saved for the sake of our attainments in righteousness, yet without being made righteous we cannot inherit the kingdom of Christ and of God. Christianity inculcates the purest morality, and enjoins, from the highest motives, the faithful discharge of all relative duties.

PRAYER.

Almighty Father! enable us to draw near unto thee in the exercise of faith, and of a true heart, not trusting in our own righteousness, but in the merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. O give us the Spirit of adoption, to produce and cherish in us the principles of a new and holy nature, that as dear children we may be followers of God, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us. We earnestly desire to be united to Christ by a living faith, that we may receive out of his fullness all needful supplies of grace, and may bring forth the fruits of righteousness and holiness in life and conversation to thy praise and glory. We devoutly thank thee for calling us out of darkness into thy marvellous light, if so be that we have tasted that the Lord is gracious. O teach and enable us to walk as children of light, having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reproveth them by our good conversation. While we would place all our trust for acceptance in thy sight, in the atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray for grace to enable us to live as becometh saints, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, shunning all uncleanness and covetousness, all filthiness and foolish talking, and every sinful practice, and seeking to perfect holiness in thy fear. Having fled for refuge to Christ,

the hope set before us in the gospel, may we never forget nor mistake the character which becomes his disciples. As he who hath called us is holy, so may we study to be holy also, in all manner of conversation and godliness. Grant us the grace of spiritual wisdom that we may understand what thy will is, and earnestly seek to fulfil it. O preserve us from all intemperance, and from every unhallowed indulgence and excess, that we may not dishonour thy holy name, nor degrade our Christian character. But fill our souls with the comforting and pervading presence of thy Holy Spirit, and with all peace and joy in believing. And give us grace to submit ourselves one to another in thy fear, and to discharge with fidelity all relative duties, taking Christ as our great example, and seeking to be subject unto him as the exalted Head and Husband of the church. In his name would we now desire to render thanks unto thee the Father, for the mercies of this day, and for all the temporal good we enjoy, but more especially for our invaluable spiritual privileges. And we pray for the enlargement of our Saviour's kingdom, and for the removal of every obstacle to its progress. May great accessions be daily made to that glorious church which is sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the word, and which Christ shall at last present to himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that it may be holy and without blemish. O do thou graciously pardon the sins we have committed this day, and take us under thy providential care during the night. Never leave nor forsake us, but be our covenant God and everlasting portion. And all that we ask is for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory and dominion ascribed, now and for ever. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 17.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH LX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

This chapter is strictly prophetic, and refers to a period still future. In elevated and magnificent strains it predicts the 'latter day glory,' the millennial rest and felicity of the church. It corresponds with several other prophecies of the same subject, particularly the description of the New Jerusalem in Rev. xxi.; although the latter, as a whole, seems to refer to a still more perfected condition of the church, even to its glorified and heavenly condition. Be-

cause it seems to be the city of Jerusalem which is here personified, sitting as a disconsolate widow in the dust, and mourning over her desolations, some have inferred that the prediction must relate to the restoration of the Jews. But although inclusive of that event, it cannot be restricted to that alone, for it is expressly said, 'the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.' In the symbolical language of prophecy, Jerusalem and Zion are terms employed to signify the true and spiritual church of Christ, because they formed the literal seat of the church under the typical dispensation. And the figure here presented to us is beautifully poetical and striking. While darkness covers the earth, the church is portrayed as sitting in the midst of it in sackcloth and ashes, persecuted, afflicted, and forsaken. But comfortable words are addressed to her, and she is commanded to arise and put on her beautiful garments, and shine forth in the glorious lustre of her Lord, because the day of her light, her joy, and triumph is come. She is commanded to raise her down-cast weeping eyes, and behold, with wonder and with gladness, the converted nations flowing into her sanctuary from every region of the globe, and bringing along with them all the abundance of their wealth and honour! And a most animating description is given of this new and blessed era—this tide of prosperity setting in from all quarters upon the church, when God's set time to favour her is come. Her gates are represented as standing open continually day and night, for the admission of the converts who are repairing in crowds from every nation of the world, 'flying as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows.' All kings are vying with each other to do her honour, the descendants of her persecutors are making their humble submission unto her, and the sons of strangers building up her walls. And it is a very remarkable expression, that 'the nation and kingdom that will not serve her shall perish.' Nor is this state of the church's high prosperity to be transient and delusive, but to be stable and permanent. For 'her sun shall no more go down, neither shall her moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be her everlasting light, and the days of her mourning shall be ended.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

When the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, rises upon the benighted soul of the sinner, with what new and holy lustre does he shine! Then all his darkness is dispelled—his ignorance is removed—the clouds of his fear and despondency are scattered, and his ravished eyes, anointed with heavenly eye-salve, look round upon new and joyful scenes. He now perceives the rich provision that is made for him—the eternal felicity and glory which await him. He perceives that all things are now his, and are working together for his good—that God is his friend, that salvation is his portion, and that heaven is his home. Though he suffer for a season, he knows that he shall soon be delivered out of all his trials. He knows that the Lord is his Saviour and Redeemer, who, in his favour, has had mercy upon him, and shall finally wipe away all tears from his eyes. And under all his

temporary sorrows and afflictions, he is animated by the lively hope of that blessed inheritance, for which these are appointed to prepare him. But he remembers that the people of the New Jerusalem are all righteous—that violence shall no longer be heard in that happy land, wasting nor destruction within all its borders; and that nothing that is unclean shall ever enter into its gates of praise, or be admitted within its walls of salvation. And, therefore, the believer diligently cultivates holiness, and labours to purify himself even as Christ is pure. But what glorious things are spoken of Zion! And what a blessed world will it be, when God shall bring them to pass!

PRAYER.

O thou eternal Spirit, who didst, in the work of creation, cause the light to shine out of darkness, shine graciously into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. Our souls are by nature dark and polluted; and, alas! by reason of the ignorance that is in us, through the blindness and corruption of our hearts, we are alienated from God, and prone to prefer the darkness to the light. But, O do thou dispel the darkness, and subdue the enmity of our carnal minds, and shed abroad a divine light, and a divine love in our souls. Almighty Father, we thank thee for the external light and privileges of the gospel, for the record thou hast given of thy Son in the scriptures, for the knowledge of salvation, and for the offer and the means of eternal life. May we duly prize such blessed advantages, and rightly improve them. O give us grace that we may love the light, that we may come unto it, and walk in it. Give us the light of spiritual knowledge in our minds, and the light of faith and of hope in our hearts. And make the light of thy gracious and reconciled countenance to shine upon us, that we may know that our sins are forgiven, and that we are called by thy Holy Spirit to be partakers of the blessings of the new covenant. In thy wrath thou hadst reason to smite us; but glory to thy name, that in thy favour thou hast had mercy on us. O fulfil in our individual experience, all the good words and the comfortable words, thou hast spoken concerning thy Israel. Called out of nature's darkness, into thy marvellous light, O help us to walk as children of the light, and as becometh our high and holy calling, and our glorious destiny, ever remembering that we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people, and that we ought to shine as lights in the world. And we would rejoice, O Lord, in our connection with the church and kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We thank thee for all thy precious promises regarding her extension, and her latter day glory; and we beseech thee

to fulfil the blessed predictions which thy mouth hath spoken, and to hasten the happy era when darkness shall no more cover the earth, nor gross darkness the people; but when all the kings of the earth shall know and honour thee, and promote thy cause. Hasten, O Lord, the peace and prosperity of Zion, beautify the place of thy sanctuary, and glorify the house of thy glory. Put an end to the afflictions and persecutions of thy church, and let her no more be forsaken and hated; but let her be called the city of the Lord, the Zion of the holy One of Israel. Make her officers peace, and her exactors righteousness. Let her people also be all righteous, that it may be seen that she is the branch of thy planting, the work of thy hands, in which thou art glorified. And, O may we all share in her felicity, and be honoured to extend her blessed influence in our generation. Hear, O Lord, these our humble prayers, and mercifully pardon all our sins, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—EPHESIANS VI.

REMARKS.

This chapter naturally divides itself into two distinct parts, the first inculcating the reciprocal duties of various relations, and forming a sequel to chapter v.; the second exhorting believers to realize their danger, and to arm themselves against it. In every relation of life, we should seek to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, not forgetting that we owe many important duties to one another, whether as children or parents, servants or masters. God has placed us in the particular station we occupy, whether it be superior or subordinate, and to please him, and consult his glory, should be our high and holy aim, in faithfully and diligently performing whatever is required of us, 'doing the will of God from the heart.' This, indeed, will ever be the conscientious endeavour of every true Christian, who is actuated by the love, and seeks to regulate his whole temper, life, and conversation, by the law, and by the example of Christ. But alas! how sadly are relative duties neglected, even by many who make a religious profession. And how unlovely is the spectacle of undutiful children, and selfish or injudicious parents, and mercenary or dishonest servants, and proud or oppressive masters, with which even Christian society is too much disfigured! But these things ought not so to be; and we deceive ourselves if we suppose, that either our knowledge or profession will avail, if our practice be habitually at fault. Nor must we think it enough to approve of the duties of other relations, while we neglect those of our own, for this is a great source of self-deception. Masters, for in-

stance, may highly approve of fidelity in servants, and servants of kindness and condescension in masters. But servants must study to be faithful, and masters to be kind and condescending themselves; and each in their own department, in these and in all other relations, to approve themselves unto God, with whom they have to do, and with whom there is no respect of persons.

But finally, how important is it for the Christian to realize his spiritual condition and danger, and to put on the whole armour of God, that he may resist the devil, and all the invisible powers of darkness, who are insidiously labouring to seduce him from his steadfastness, and to effect the eternal ruin of his soul! He cannot contend, indeed, with such formidable and malicious adversaries in his own strength; but the grace of God is sufficient for him, and he will be made strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. But while a complete suit of holy armour is provided for him, girded in which he cannot possibly be conquered, but must, on the contrary, be triumphantly victorious; while God has prepared for him both a breast-plate and a helmet, both a shield and a sword; the believer is required to 'put them on,' and to use them, otherwise he will not be able to withstand in the evil day. His shield is faith, his helmet is salvation, his breastplate is righteousness, and his sword is the word of God. And if he employs these divine weapons well, girding his loins also with truth, and having his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and continues instant and persevering in prayer, and in holy watchfulness, then the Spirit of God will 'teach his hands to war, and his fingers to fight,' and render him more than conqueror at last, through him that loved him, and gave himself for him. And every one who engages in the Christian warfare, will sympathise with his fellow-soldiers, who are fighting under the same banner, and the same Captain of salvation; and he will make supplication, not for himself alone, but also for all saints, and especially for the ministers of the gospel, that utterance may be given to them, and that they may open their mouths boldly and successfully for God.

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, we would humbly approach thee with holy reverence, and yet with filial confidence; rejoicing to believe that with thee our God there is mercy, that thou mayest be feared, and that thou art now reconciling a guilty world to thyself, through the death of thine own Son. For his righteousness' sake, we implore thee to forgive our offences, and to renew our hearts. We lament the deep corruption of our nature, and our constant proneness in consequence of it, to forget and omit the duties thou requirest of us. We are convinced in our minds, that the way of duty is the way of happiness, and that there is no true satisfaction, no peace or profit in sin. But alas! we feel a law in our members, warring against the law of our minds, and preventing us from doing the things which we

would. O do thou deliver us from the dominion of sin, and write thy law in our hearts, and give us the spirit of new obedience. Thou hast placed us in the various relations in which we stand to our fellow-men. May we study to discharge all the duties that belong to them in thy fear, and with a single eye to thy glory. We can do nothing in our own strength, but do thou, O Lord, make thy grace to be sufficient for us. And teach us ever to recognise, especially, the relations in which we stand to thee as creatures, and as redeemed sinners; and to feel the infinite obligations under which we are laid to serve thee, and the deep sense of gratitude by which we should be actuated. May it be our grand aim to please and honour God in all that we do. And may we daily search thy word, for the purpose of learning thy will, and with a sincere desire to perform it. But surrounded as we are in this sinful world with adverse influences, may we never foolishly trust in our own weak and treacherous hearts, but in the promised assistance of thy Holy Spirit. Fortify us to withstand the temptations by which we are assailed; help us to resist those formidable powers of darkness which are arrayed against us. Let not our great adversary the devil prevail over us, or entangle us by his insidious wiles. Enable us to put on the whole armour of God—to fight the good fight of faith, and in thy strength, to overcome all our spiritual enemies. We humbly thank thee for thy past goodness and protection. We pray for thy counsel to guide us this day, and during all our future progress on earth. And O grant us grace, so to employ our time here as to prepare for heaven. Graciously bless each of us, and all near and dear to us. Reward our benefactors, and forgive and change the hearts of our enemies. We pray for the universal diffusion of our holy religion, and for the entire subversion of all idolatry and sin. And we humbly entreat thee to hear and answer our prayers, for our divine Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXVII. 37—40.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CIX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In Acts i. 20, we have the inspiration of this portion of the word distinctly recognized, and are guided to a right interpretation of the same. From the ap-

plication the apostle there makes of the eighth verse, 'his bishopric, or office, let another take,' the following things are abundantly evident—that the psalmist here speaks in the person of the Messiah; that the curses pronounced by him are to be regarded in the light of prophetic denunciations; and that they fell upon Judas, the son of perdition, and by parity of reasoning, may be considered as having fallen on his countrymen, who shared in his guilt, and filled up the measure of their iniquities by crucifying the Lord of glory. In their present condition we can clearly trace the various calamities which are here enumerated. Their habitation is desolate; their children wandering as outcasts; their labour spoiled; their name, as a church and a nation, blotted out; and their cursing is to them as the garment which covereth them, and for a girdle wherewith they are girded continually. When thus viewed, the psalm before us is peculiarly fitted to awaken our sympathy, stimulate our zeal, and call forth our prayers in behalf of the ancient people of God, who are yet to be brought into the fold of the Redeemer, as well as in behalf of all who are lying in wickedness, that they may be saved from the wrath to come, of which the misery of the Jews is only a faint representation.

God is the protector and avenger of all who put their trust in him, and has constituted prayer the medium through which he imparts to us the needed supplies of grace. Even the Redeemer gave himself to prayer, offered up supplications, with strong cryings and tears, and was heard in that he feared, ver. 1—4. The depravity of the heart is especially manifested in requiting his disinterested and unparalleled love with hatred, ver. 4, 5. The effects of unbelief and apostacy are felt in time as well as in eternity, by our posterity as well as by ourselves, ver. 6—20. All our pleas for deliverance should be grounded on the promised mercy of God, ver. 21—25. A sense of his gracious presence far outweighs every earthly trouble in which his service may involve us, ver. 26—28. The judgments of God on the enemies of his church furnish matter for praise, as thereby his administration is proved to be both holy and powerful, just and good, ver. 29—31.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Christ also hath suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. The conflict we have to maintain, the sufferings to endure, and the obloquy to encounter, are not for one moment to be compared with his. As he gave himself to prayer, so ought we. When our motives are misconstrued, our feelings wounded, our reputation or our usefulness marred, we must put far away from us the suggestions of unsanctified and worldly men, crush every thing like a proud and revengeful spirit, and commit our cause to God, who judgeth righteously. Let us think on him who endured such rebellion of sinners against himself. Let us seek by prayer the supplies of his Spirit, and we may rest assured they will not be withheld. They will be experienced by ourselves in a freedom from turbulent feelings, a holy serenity of soul. They will be seen by others in our meekness, patience, and fortitude, our spirit

of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. We will live down calumny and opposition, and force those to be ashamed who have falsely accused our good conversation in Christ.

PRAYER.

O God of our praise, we desire this morning to lift our souls in humble and grateful adoration unto thee. Turn not away our prayer from thee. Withhold not thy grace from us. Command thy blessing upon us, even life for evermore. What cause have we for gratitude that thou hast not cast us off for ever; that thou hast not rendered our habitation desolate, and brought wrath upon us even to the uttermost? We are enemies to thee in our minds by wicked works. We have manifested our enmity in various forms; in our aversion to prayer; in our want of subjection to thy law; in our neglect of the great salvation; in our practical disregard of thy threatenings; and in living to ourselves, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Our backslidings are many, they testify against us. We cast ourselves on thy mercy in Christ Jesus our Lord. Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render unto thee the fruit of our lips, the sacrifice of praise continually. When we read in thy word of the awful effects of apostasy from thee, may we fear lest we fall after the same example of unbelief. May we watch unto prayer. May we cultivate a growing acquaintance with the character and work of Christ, and labour in his strength to enter into the rest that remains for the people of God. May we esteem his reproach greater riches than the treasures of the world, and not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou us from secret faults, keep us back from presumptuous sin, and let no iniquity obtain dominion over us. We thank thee for the undisturbed enjoyment of our spiritual privileges, and more especially for permitting us to see another sabbath. Unite our hearts to fear thy name, to hallow thy day, to utter abundantly thy praises, and to draw nourishment from thy word. Increase our spiritual appetite, and satisfy us with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy place. Be very gracious to our pastor. Stand by and strengthen him in his varied labours. May he speak to the heart; by manifestation of the truth commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and be blessed of thee in winning souls to Christ. Awaken the careless to serious thought. Send relief to thy poor and afflicted ones. Save thy people, and bless their inheritance; feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

Forgive, we beseech thee, our manifold sins, and graciously accept of us for Christ's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLV. 1—5.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CX. CXI.

REMARKS.

The former of these psalms applies exclusively to Christ, who was both the Lord and the Son, the root and the offspring of David; and though written many ages before his advent, contains a full and most impressive description of his mediatorial kingdom.

Ver. 1. How exalted the station, which, as God-man, he occupies! His dominion, which was given him by the solemn decree of the Father from eternity, is fixed, supreme, and subversive of all opposition, so that every knee, either willingly or through overpowering dread, shall bow to him.

Ver. 2, 3. How extensive and gracious his conquests! When he ascended up on high, and sent forth his Spirit, giving effect to the rod of his strength—the gospel of his grace, which proceeded out of Zion or Jerusalem—then was the day of his power. The early converts to the faith, constrained by his love, made a voluntary surrender of themselves to him; sanctified by his Spirit, they shone in the beauties of holiness; and called secretly by his grace, out of every nation and every class, were countless as the drops of dew glistening when morning opens on tree, and bush, and flower.

Ver. 4. How full the provision made in and through him for their final salvation! By the decree of the Eternal, which, for our strong consolation, our sure ground of hope, was ratified by an oath, he was constituted a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek. That distinguished personage, in the days of Abraham, was invested both with the regal and priestly office; and as nothing is said of the time of his assuming or resigning the latter office; as he stands forth to view in the sacred volume simply in the character of priest of the most high God, and 'has a kind of perpetuity given to him,' he is a faint type of him who hath an unchangeable priesthood, and who is able to save to the very uttermost all who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Ver. 5, 6. How terrible when he rises to judgment! The kings of the earth may plot; the heads of many countries may combine; the beast and the false prophet may concentrate their forces to break in pieces his rod, and to wear out his saints; but in the day of his wrath they will be pierced through, and their ruin will be great and irretrievable.

Ver. 7. How broad and deep the foundation on which his mediatorial power rests! He has drunk of the brook or torrent issuing from the violated law and insulted government of God. He has endured that wrath which would have swept us away, and involved us in perpetual desolation; and what he has

left behind of suffering, is just what is needed to conform us to his image, and prepare us for sharing in his glory.

PSALM CXI. forms an appropriate and beautiful sequel to the former, and is generally thought to have been used during the celebration of the pass-over, when all the males were assembled in Jerusalem. The grand theme of praise in the congregation of the saints is the works of the Lord. They trace with delight his wisdom, power, purity, and beneficence, manifested in them all. What awakens, however, their highest admiration, their most fervent gratitude, is the bread of life he has provided for their support, the heavenly Canaan he has given them in promise, which is greater far than the heritage of the heathen; the eternal covenant which he bears in mind, notwithstanding their unbelief, selfishness, and backslidings; the complete redemption from sin, death, and hell, he has sent them, through Jesus Christ the Lord. In these works, which will continue for ever, his name or character is clearly seen to be merciful and gracious, just and true, holy and reverend. Spiritual wisdom, good understanding to discern the glory of them, is to be found only in those who feel their own nothingness and unworthiness, and leads to increasing delight in holy living and grateful praising.

We are, either by baptism or by partaking of the Lord's supper, in profession the subjects of Christ, united to the assembly of his justified ones. Let us never forget that they only will be acknowledged as such who are born again by his Spirit through the word; who yield to him the throne of their hearts; who make war with the kingdom of satan in his strength; who seek to be conformed to his death; and who, by him, offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of their lips, giving thanks to his name.

PRAYER.

O God, thou art glorious above all blessing and praise. We have only a very faint conception of the greatness of thy majesty, the extent of thy dominion, the glory of thy character, the riches of thy grace, or the power of thy wrath. When we had fallen into the depths of guilt and misery, thou didst, in the fullness of time, send forth thine own Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem us who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. We rejoice in the assurance that he has finished the work which thou gavest him to do; that he hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; that he hath brought in an everlasting righteousness; and that he is able to save to the very uttermost all that come unto thee by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Penetrate us with a deep sense of our sinfulness. May we be ashamed and confounded, and never dare to open our mouths any more in our own defence. May we feel and acknowledge, that if we had our due, the place of torment would be

our portion. May we seek and find redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of all our sins. Make us a willing people in the day of thy power. Enrol us among the number of thy called, and chosen, and faithful ones. Nerve us for the contest with sin, satan, and the world. May we go forth to duty and trial, leaning on the omnipotent arm of the Redeemer; and may all our need be supplied out of thy riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Lord, increase the faith and patience of the saints. Give abundant success to the armies of the Lamb. Gird thy sword on thy thigh, O most Mighty, and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness. Hasten the time when every knee shall bow to Jesus, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Follow, we beseech thee, with thine enriching blessing, the dispensation of word and sacrament, this day throughout the church. May sinners in Zion be afraid. May the stout-hearted, and those who are far from righteousness, be subdued, and brought nigh unto thee by the blood of the cross. And may thine own people every where increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men. We bless thee for the continued supplies of spiritual food. Evermore give us the bread of life. Satisfy us early with thy mercy, so shall we rejoice and be glad all our days. Forgive, we humbly entreat thee, all our sins and shortcomings. Restore our souls, and lead us in the paths of righteousness for thy name's sake. We desire this evening to lie down in peace, committing ourselves, and all who are dear to us, to thy blessed guardianship. May we awake in safety, and ever walk closely with thee. Graciously listen to the voice of our petitions; and do unto us above all that we can ask or think, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXVI.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH LXI. LXII.

REMARKS.

Our Lord applies the striking words with which the former of these chapters opens, to himself, and thus leaves us in no doubt of whom the prophet speaketh. (See Luke iv. 16.) Viewed in reference to him, this portion of the word is full of the most precious evangelical truth.

1. The solemn consecration of Christ. The Spirit of the Lord was upon him in unmeasured effusion.

He was anointed with the oil of gladness, and thereby invested with a fullness of gifts and graces.

2. The work he had to perform. To preach the gospel, or glad tidings of salvation, through his own death; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, the great spiritual jubilee, which, if misimproved, would be succeeded by a day of vengeance; and to do all this with effect, so that the meek, however poor, would be satisfied; the broken-hearted, however desperate their case, healed; the slaves of sin, however degrading their bondage, set free; and the mourners in Zion, however deep their dejection, comforted, and made to bring forth fruit with patience, to the praise and glory of God.

3. The enlargement of the church by the calling and conversion of the Gentiles, as well as the blessedness of the period when strangers should stand and feed the flock of Christ. Considered as a whole, it would be marked by a great regard to ordinances, and to those who faithfully administered them; by an increase of spiritual riches; the rolling away of reproach; the prevalence of truth and justice; most visible tokens of the divine regard, and sustained rejoicings in the perfection of the Redeemer's work, and the triumphs of his grace.

In the latter chapter the prophet dwells on the splendid vision presented to his mind, and intimates his resolution that he would plead, with holy importunity, till the righteousness of the Redeemer, in the salvation of his church, should shine with such brightness in the eyes of all nations, as to attract their adoring, confiding, and admiring regard. He then brings out, under the guidance of the Spirit, some additional features of this happy period.

1. The new name which would be given to the members of the church, a name which was actually bestowed when the gospel was first preached to the Gentiles as a body, and which is beautifully descriptive of their character, privileges, and hopes. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

2. The peculiar honour conferred upon the church. She is represented as a crown of glory, a royal diadem in the hand of God, full of spiritual gems bought by the blood of Emmanuel, polished by his Spirit, and destined to shine for ever and ever. She is, moreover, represented as no longer desolate and forsaken, but married, standing in the high and blessed relation of spouse to Christ, and surrounded by a numerous and united progeny. What a meaning will be given to the words of the prophet when ancient Israel are restored to their own land, and after ages of desolation and trial have passed over them, are again received within the bosom of the Christian church.

3. The means by which the promises of God, in regard to the church, should be accomplished, even the earnest and continued prayers of the watchmen, or ministers of Zion, as well as of all the remembrancers of the Lord, those in every place who call upon his name.

4. The ample security that all would be fulfilled. The omnipotence of Jehovah was pledged to give the church outward prosperity as well as inward peace; to bless abundantly her provisions; to remove every obstacle in the way of her enlargement; and to ren-

der her not only an object of complacency to himself, but a source of light and centre of attraction to all around her.

The grand end which Christ has in view in all the light, freedom, peace, and consolation he imparts to the humble and penitent believer, is to render him fruitful in every good work.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, adored be thy name, that thou hast not left us like millions of our fellow-creatures, naturally no worse than we are, to feel after thee if haply we might find thee. Through the tender mercy of our God the day spring from on high hath visited us, to give light unto us who sat in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace. Thou hast brought near thy righteousness, and revealed unto us the abundance of grace and truth. Thou art inviting and beseeching us all, unworthy as we are, to receive the atonement; to be reconciled unto thee through the death of thy Son; to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. What manner of persons ought we to be in fervent gratitude, in deep humility, in holy conversation and godliness? Alas! we have requited thy love with the basest ingratitude. We have disregarded thy solemn and affectionate calls. We have undervalued the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel. We have turned to our farms and our merchandise, our studies and amusements, and neglected the things that belong to our everlasting peace. We have grieved thy Spirit, both by our remissness and carnality. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Blot out, we beseech thee, as a thick cloud, our transgressions, and as a cloud our sins. Revive and quicken us for thine own name's sake. Rescue us from the spiritual poverty, degradation, and misery, in which we are involved. Bring us into the glorious liberty of thy children. O let thy Holy Spirit be upon us, that we may venerate the power of the Redeemer; that we may confide in his love; that we may rejoice in his salvation; that we may grow in conformity to his image; and that we may seek the good of his church always. Lord, do thou accomplish, in thine own good time, the glorious things which thou hast spoken of Zion. Remove every obstacle in the way of her enlargement. Strengthen the bars of her gates. Preserve peace in her borders, and fill her with the finest of the wheat. Make bare thy holy arm in the conversion of thine ancient people, and render speedily Jerusalem a praise in the whole earth. We bless thee, O Lord, for thy protecting care, and thine unwea-

ried goodness. Thou hast made our cup run over. Thou hast punished us far less than our sins deserve. In wrath thou hast remembered mercy. May our comforts be blessed, our trials sanctified, and our brotherly love increased. Be very gracious to all who are dear to us. If they be in danger, do thou protect them; if they be in sorrow, do thou comfort them; if they be exposed to temptation, do thou keep them from falling; and if they be still in their sins, do thou save them by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Give food to the hungry, execute judgment for the oppressed, and raise up all that are bowed down. O Lord, hear; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not for thine own name's sake. And unto thee be ascribed all glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXII. 5.

SCRIPTURE—PHILIPPIANS I.

REMARKS.

Paul here associates Timothy with himself, because he happened to be with him in Rome, where he was a prisoner, and was well known to the Philippians as his beloved companion and devoted fellow-labourer. He addresses the saints in Christ Jesus, those who were sanctified by his Spirit, with the bishops and deacons, or pastors and elders, the only two permanent office bearers in the Christian church. After the usual salutation, which comprises every spiritual blessing, he expresses his gratitude to God that, by the reception of the gospel, they were partakers with him of grace, and joined together in holy communion; and his conviction, from the sympathy they felt with him in his bonds, that the good work begun in them was of God, and consequently could not fail to reach a glorious termination. Aware, however, that his gracious purposes were usually carried into effect through the use of means, he proceeds to avail himself of these. He first of all lifts a comprehensive prayer in their behalf, that their love might be expanded by an increase of spiritual knowledge; a growing experience of the graciousness of God, so that they might be quick in discerning what was good, sincere, inoffensive, and steady in pursuing it, abounding in holy and benevolent deeds to the praise of grace. He next endeavours to obviate the offence which his imprisonment in Rome, with all his subsequent trials, might occasion, assuring them that they had fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel. Some, even in the palace of Nero, where vice reigned triumphant, had, through his instrumentality, cordially embraced the truth. Others, who had yielded to fear, and shrunk from an undisguised profession of Christianity, had, on witnessing his holy fortitude, assumed a decided tone, and

preached the word undeterred by what man could do unto them. And though some, under the cloak of zeal, and a form of sound words, had sought to diminish his authority and pierce him to the heart, still even they, by the eternal truths which they promulgated, advanced, contrary to their intentions, in spite of themselves, the common cause. In the advancement of this cause he saw abundant ground for rejoicing. As for himself, he dreaded not their opposition, convinced that, through the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ given in answer to their prayers, it would turn to his salvation, or progressive sanctification. He feared not death, knowing it would be gain, an immense accession to his happiness. He had a desire to depart and to be with Christ, ushered into the glorious presence of him who was the Author and end of his life, his all in all; and he clung to existence not from any selfish considerations, but for this reason, among others, that he might contribute to their furtherance and joy of faith. Lastly, he exhorts them to demean themselves in a way becoming the gospel. Efforts would be made to move them away from their faith and hope. They were to be united and determined in their resistance, accounting their sufferings for the sake of Christ a peculiar honour conferred on them; a token of their salvation; a proof that they shared in his conflict, and consequently would share in his reward.

What elevation of mind! what generosity of disposition! what purity of heart! what singleness of purpose! what conspicuous evidences of grace! Have we so learned Christ? Is the same mind in us that was in him? tender sympathy with others; earnest prayer for their and our growth in grace; humble acquiescence in the divine will; warm concern for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause; joyful hope of being eternally with him, and an ardent desire to magnify him whether it be by life or death?—then we have abundant tokens of salvation. The good work has been begun in us, and will assuredly be carried forward till the day of Christ. While we admire the devotedness of the apostle, let us never forget the means by which he was enabled to be faithful to the death; the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and the prayers of his brethren. Let us continue in the exercise of lowly dependence and fervent intercession. In this way we will suppress selfishness, foster charity, sweeten mutual intercourse, and become more and more meet for eternal communion in heaven. Doubtless our friendships there will be all the more tender and sweet from the recollection of the blessings we have imparted and received by fervent supplications here.

PRAYER.

O God, we adore thee as the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, and with whom there is no variableness, neither the least shadow of turning. We rejoice to know that what thou hast done for countless multitudes, in every age of the church, thou art able and willing to do also for us. With thee there is enough of heavenly provision, and to spare. O do thou begin thy good work in each

of our souls. Disclose to us the full extent of our depravity. Lead us in brokenness of spirit to the footstool of thy throne. Cause all thy goodness in Christ Jesus to pass before us. Shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of thy glory in the face of Christ. May we rejoice here in having no confidence in the flesh. May we be constrained by his love to resist temptation, to mortify sin, to endure afflictions, and to abound in the fruits of righteousness, which are, through Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God. May we never be moved away from the faith and hope of the gospel. May we follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; in sunshine and darkness; in joy and sorrow; through good report and bad report. May we continue steadfast and immovable, always abounding in thy work, in nothing terrified by our adversaries; and in the prospect of death, may we have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. We thank thee, O Lord, for thy continued goodness. Unless the Lord had been our help, our souls had almost dwelt in silence. When we said, Our feet are slipping away, thy mercy, O Lord, held us up. In the multitude of our thoughts within us, thy comforts delight our souls. God of our fathers, be the God of our children. Bring all with whom we are connected, and in whom we are interested, to the fellowship of the gospel. Make them partakers of thy grace. Remove every root of bitterness from our hearts, and prepare us for eternal communion in heaven. Regard the prayer of the destitute; hear the groaning of the prisoner; and loose those that are appointed to death. Go forth with thy faithful ministers and missionaries everywhere, making the mountain a plain before them. Let idolatry with its unnumbered evils be speedily abolished. Let those who are incensed against thee be ashamed, and all who trust in thee rejoice. Let the whole earth be filled with the glory of the Lord. And now, O Lord, what wait we for? Our hope is in thee. Free us from all our trespasses. Stretch over us this night the shield of thy blessed protection. Let goodness and mercy follow us all our days, and may we dwell at last in thy house for ever. And to thy name, in Christ Jesus, be eternal praise. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CVII. 31.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH LXIII. LXIV.

REMARKS.

The scripture now read opens with a striking description of the vengeance which the Messiah executes on the enemies of his church. In the affecting representations given of the singular compassion of the Son of God, so strikingly displayed in the mysterious death which he bore for sinners, we are apt to forget that there are features in his character which frown awfully on those who are engaged in active resistance to his enterprise of mercy. Though his patience may suffer long, the year of his redeemed will come, and then the 'day of vengeance' will be in his heart. There is no infatuation so hazardous as that which at last awakens to evoke him in whose nature boundless mercies dwell; but who never can disregard the injuries done to his people for his sake, though, for a season, his anger frequently seems to sleep.

Israel often grieved the Holy Spirit, when he spoke to them by the ministry of a long succession of prophets; and to this all their internal disasters are to be ascribed in former periods of their history, as well as in that long and dreary rejection with which they have now, for many centuries, been visited. God is at all times equally disposed to befriend his people when they maintain their allegiance to him; but when he turns to be their enemy, their condition is pitiable indeed. His ancient people presented a striking illustration of this truth. When they had no chariots, and no assistance from neighbouring countries, they were invincible in the succour of their God, even when assailed by those who were most abundantly provided with the weapons of aggressive warfare; but at the period of their greatest internal opulence and most extensive alliances, they proved an easy prey to the invader, because their disloyalty to God had deprived them of his protection, and caused his wrath to summon the eagles as to a carcass doomed to destruction. What a warning to the inhabitants of the world, who may see, in his providence towards Israel, an exhibition of the principles on which his administration proceeds, by whose will all nations prosper or decline!

In this portion of scripture we have an exemplification of the feelings with which such as fear God should survey the calamities brought on communities by transgression. The prophet not only depicts the scenes by which his feelings were deeply wounded, but lays them before the throne of grace in the language of impassioned intercession. It is easy to set up for censurers of abounding evils; but to make these the matter of earnest prayer, is quite a different matter. And no man can fully estimate the importance of such intercession when people are becoming ripe for judgment. How long such supplications may have, in every case, delayed the devastation of the land, we are not told; but we know, that on account of the humiliation and tears of Josiah's time, the impending wrath was delayed during the entire period of his life.

PRAYER.

Holy God, we acknowledge the entire righteousness of all thy dispensations in the government of this world. Thou mightest have done with our church and nation as thou didst to other churches and other lands, for we have in many respects grievously offended thee, both as regards our duty in thy church, and in the civil community wherewith we are connected. Be merciful to us according to the multitude of thy compassions, and the merit of our Redeemer's propitiation, and not according to our own deservings. May we be enabled ever to feel the influence of the death of Christ subduing the enmity of our hearts, and producing in us the renouncement of all rebellion against thee. And do thou grant that our church and country may so turn from all which is displeasing in thine eyes, as to experience the fulfilment of the promise thou hast made to all who reform and forsake their sins. O Lord God, remember the desolate condition of thy people Israel, far more afflicted now than when it was in former times deeply bewailed by thy prophets. Great has been their sins, as a people, against the Messiah, for whom their fathers, in former times, looked with longing desire. Do thou speedily remove the vail which is upon their hearts, and give them savingly to know him, whom, with wicked hands, their fathers crucified. And may the ingathering of Israel be to the Gentile nations even as life from the dead. May all the other nations of the world, now sitting in darkness, whose forefathers enjoyed the brilliant shining of the Sun of righteousness, be enlightened and awakened by thy Holy Spirit. Their candlestick has been removed out of its place by reason of their undervaluing and misimproving their exalted privileges: may their day of merciful visitation even return, in which the glad sound of the eternal gospel shall invite them to thy feet. And do thou lead those who enjoy the true light of thy word to consider seriously the darkness which has arisen on the countries where some of thy most famous churches were once located, lest they imitate them in the sin which has brought on them so terrible a calamity. Hear us, forgive us, save us, for the Lord Jesus' sake. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, for ever. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI. 8.

SCRIPTURE—PHILIPPIANS II.

REMARKS.

The true ministers of Christ consider their joy as fulfilled when the several fruits of the Christian life appear on those who have been watched over by them, with anxious assiduity, as the seals of their ministry. This ought to have some effect in leading the followers of Christ to watchfulness and diligence in exhibiting themselves as being illustrations of the effects of the doctrines by which they profess to have been brought from darkness to marvellous light. But the great motive which ought to lead to living Christianity, is the example set before us by the Author and Finisher of our faith. What an illustrious exemplification of devotedness to the will of God have we in the mysterious agonies to which Emmanuel submitted, in order to open a way for the execution of the Father's purposes of mercy towards a lost world! The mind feels utterly at a loss whether to wonder most at the extent of obedience rendered by the human nature of Christ, amidst these unutterable sufferings, or at the height of excellence to which that same nature was raised, as the recompense of this amazing devotedness.

What a solemn incentive to diligence in working out our own salvation is the thought, that God works in us 'both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' The neglecting of carrying the will thus wrought in us into energetic activity, is the resisting of the gracious impulse of a present God. May not the want of duly weighing this be the reason why many complain of willingness departed, and a heavy load of death felt pressing with augmenting weight on their spirits? There is serious danger, not only in directly resisting the emotions awakened by the Holy Spirit, but in neglecting to improve them by activity in the path of duty to which they point. Though a true Christian never will finally perish, he may, by neglecting the spiritual life communicated at the season of conversion, be left to mourn many days in heaviness over departed joys and experiences, which have left in his heart an aching void such as the world can never fill.

What a striking specimen of Christian feeling do we see in the statements here given by Paul of himself, and of some who followed Christ with him, at this early period in the history of the church! Timotheus and Epaphroditus were deeply imbued with the same spirit as the apostle whom they zealously endeavoured to aid in the execution of his ministry. The fervent love of these disciples stands forth in striking contrast with the selfish feelings which characterized many others, of whom the melancholy declaration is made, that they sought 'their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.' Alas! there has been in every age too much of this spirit in the professing church; and this sometimes appears in a guise extremely plausible in the case of men seemingly immersed in anxiety about their own spiritual condition and improvement, but evidently indifferent to the situation of a perishing world, and

the manifestation of the Redeemer's glory in the increased number of stars destined to glitter in his diadem. Successful efforts for advancing them in salvation are uniformly found put forth by those whose solicitude, beginning with the concerns of their own souls, is limited only by the wide circumference which includes the place of hope, and the multitudes of immortal beings travelling through it to an unchanging eternity.

PRAYER.

Eternal God, we are ashamed to think how much our anxieties have been confined to our own individual concerns, and how feeble has been our intercession in behalf of the heathen who are living without thee in the world. Lord Jesus, we blush to look on thy cross, where unspeakable sufferings bespoke thy compassion for mankind, feeling the deep reproach cast by the light streaming thence on the feebleness of our endeavours, and the insignificant nature of the sacrifices we have made to advance the holy cause of celestial compassion. Father of mercies, may our hearts feel the impress of thy great benevolence, and show our fellowship with thee by the odour of that love breathing in our lives, which led thee to give thy Son, for man's transgression, to die. May the mind which was in Christ be increasingly seen pervading the hearts and lives of his followers. To the great harvest of souls, ripening in the fields of this world for an endless life, send forth many labourers, who will not count their lives dear unto themselves, that they may testify on this sinful earth the gospel of the grace of God. And may the whole earth soon be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God shining in the face of Christ, even as the waters cover the channels of the stormy sea. We commend ourselves and our supplications to the ever-prevalent intercession of our great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—ISAIAH LXVI.

REMARKS.

Here we have statements, solemnly blended, of wrath against the enemies of God, and mercy to his people. This chapter, in this respect, bears a striking resemblance to the general outline of revelation, which displays, in solemn proximity, the awakening threatenings, and the gracious declarations, which issue from the throne of the Eternal. It is one of

the most dangerous mutilations of truth to dis sever, in our apprehension, two things so closely united in the manifestation of those counsels, by which the present and the future destinies of mankind shall be determined. By an utter exclusion of the terrors of the Lord from our thoughts, we may lose sight of all the accusing considerations which are drawn from the danger of neglecting his great salvation, and which have the most important influence on our exertions for our own safety and that of our fellow-sinners. While, if our eyes are turned away from the gracious declarations which encourage the sinner's return, and revive the drooping spirits of the saints, we may sink into the darkness of despair, or have our energies in the path of duty depressed by the lowering aspect of external circumstances.

Where so many striking annunciations are set before us, it is difficult to speak of them with brevity, or to select the more prominent statements, where all are so striking. The chapter opens with a majestic description of the greatness of God, and then states the object on the surface of this earth on which he looks with the greatest complacency. We are too apt to conceive that magnificent buildings, and numerous worshippers, and a ritual calculated to fascinate the attentions of men, are contemplated with the same interest by him who dwells on high. There may be edifices exquisitely ornamented, thronged by attentive auditories, and where the feelings are excited by all the appliances of human eloquence, and the heart moved by strains of transporting music, while yet the whole is surveyed by God with unmingled abhorrence, because the whole assemblage thus engaged are alienated in affection from him, and engaged in a course of unbroken rebellion. But wherever there is a poor and contrite spirit, trembling at the word of God, whether worshipping at the princely altar, in buildings decorated by human art, and set apart for the public ordinances of Zion, or on the cold and lonely moor, where persecuted wanderers once poured out their hearts in prayer, there the Lord looks as on the object of deepest interest to him of all which earth contains.

The conclusion of the chapter forms a striking contrast to its commencement. The destruction of impenitent transgressors is set forth in language exceedingly awful. Men are often urged on in the ways of rebellion by the applause they meet with from their fellow-worms. What a striking change shall yet take place in this world, when the godless, who were greeted with the loudest applause during many ages, shall have their memories loaded with universal reproach as the enemies of their species! And what a still more appalling spectacle will be their final ruin, when they shall be, through ceaseless centuries, living objects of abhorrence to the whole unfallen and restored creation of God! The destruction of the finally rebellious will be contemplated by the saints with mingled feelings, but without the slightest dissent from the righteous judgments of God. They will regard their own security from this ruin as effected by the undeserved grace of God, which turned them from the ways of disobedience to the wisdom of the justified. And in the terrible spectacle revealed before their gaze, they, in

hand of my righteousness.' Having these promises, let us be strong and of good courage, for the Lord our God will not fail us, nor forsake us. If we be fearful and faint-hearted, the Lord may put us to shame in the presence of our enemies; but if we stand fast in the Lord, depending on the promised aids of his grace, we shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we adore thee as the Creator and the Governor of the universe, the sovereign disposer of all events. Thou madest us, and not we ourselves. Thou upholdest us in life, and orderest every circumstance in our lot; and all thy paths are mercy and truth to such as keep thy covenant and thy testimonies. Give us grace to take hold of thy covenant in Jesus Christ. May we joyfully receive him, as he is offered to us in the gospel, as the propitiation for our sins, the end of the law for righteousness, our advocate and intercessor with thee the Father. And whilst we rely on his merits and mediation for pardon and justification for righteousness and eternal life, may the love of Christ constrain us to live not unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us and rose again, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour by a walk and conversation becoming the gospel. And do thou, O Lord, fit us for whatever may be thy will and our duty. Thou hast made all things for thyself, and hast a right to employ us according to thy pleasure. In the respective situations which thou hast appointed us, may we be active, diligent, and laborious; and may we obtain mercy of the Lord to be found faithful. Sensible of our own weakness, that in ourselves we are without strength, may we be clothed with humility. But knowing that there is help for us in God, assured that he is faithful who hath said, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness, may we go on in the strength of the Lord, declining no service, and fearing no danger. May our only inquiry be, What, Lord, wilt thou have us to do? and do thou work in us both to will and to do of thy good pleasure, that we may glorify thee in all things through Jesus Christ. Should fidelity to thee, our God, expose us to hatred and persecution from men, let us not be dismayed at their faces; but knowing who hath said, I will never leave nor forsake thee, may we boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. We bless thee, O Lord, that thou hast, in all ages of the church, raised up and qualified men for thy service. Be very gracious to all ministers and missionaries. Let thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on

earth as it is done in heaven. May great grace be unto all who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity; and do thou add to thy church such as shall be saved. Have compassion on the poor and destitute, on the afflicted and the dying, and grant them grace according to their need. Regard in mercy our beloved friends and relatives. May their names be written in the book of life, and may they be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. We thank thee for the mercies of the past night and of this morning. Let thy presence go with us throughout the day. In all our purposes and pursuits may we act in a humble dependence on thy grace, with an earnest desire to do thy will and to promote thy glory; and do thou prosper all our undertakings for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XVI. 8.

SCRIPTURE—PHILIPPIANS IV.

REMARKS.

The apostle having, in the close of the preceding chapter, reminded the Philippians of the glory to which they looked forward, at the second coming of Christ, 'who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body,' in language the most tender and affectionate, exhorts them in that prospect, and standing on the strength of God, to be steadfast in the faith and obedience of the gospel, as they had already distinguished themselves by their zeal and fidelity, so to endure unto the end. In the same view he earnestly entreats, that all differences may be laid aside, that they would be of one accord and one mind, maintaining the peace of the church, strengthening the hands, and contributing to the comfort of the faithful. And he once and again encourages them, as he had done before, chap. iii. 1, to rejoice in the Lord; however dark their prospects, however severe their sufferings, still to rejoice in God their Saviour. With joy in the Lord he recommends moderation, or meekness and forbearance towards men, amidst all the persecutions and tribulations that they endured. And he urges them to this conduct by the consideration that the Lord was at hand, that he was now present with them, to sustain them by the arm of his omnipotence; and that the day was fast approaching when he would receive them to himself, and their sorrow would be turned into joy. As connected with moderation, he guards them against sinful anxiety and solicitude about the things of this world, and teaches them in every condition to pour out their hearts before God in humble, fervent, and believing prayer, mingling with their petitions for future blessings, thanksgivings for mercies received; and thus casting all their cares upon the Lord, exercising a humble dependence on his bounty, they might expect to be blessed

Son to a life of sorrow, and to a death of untold agony, that we might live through him. We magnify thee, O ever glorious Son of God, for the mysterious righteousness, the righteousness of God made manifest in the flesh, by which sinners may now be made righteous notwithstanding all the guiltiness into which they have been plunged by transgression. O Holy Ghost, we bless thee for the revelation of this plan for justifying sinners, devised in the counsels of eternity, and now declared by thee in the word given by thine own inspiration. Eternal God, may this sacred righteousness be all our confidence in life and death. May that faith be in us which unites to the Lord Jesus; and do thou impute to us his righteousness for our justification before thee. We renounce and forego all dependence on ourselves and on our own deservings, and turn to this as our only confidence. And may our hearts be constrained by the love he displayed in making this amazing provision for our recovery, to live only to him. May the great object for which he came into the world—the destruction of the works of satan, ever be the foremost object of our lives; and to his second coming may we look with longing expectation, as the period of our perfect sanctification, and of his completed glory. Lord, increase the number of those who walk under the constraining influence of the cross of Christ. Awaken those who dream of peace while really at war with him; and hasten the period when he shall reign undisputed and unresisted from shore to shore, even to the earth's remotest boundary. Hear us for his, our Redeemer's sake. Glory be to the God of Israel, even to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost for ever. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXVIII. 6.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH I.

REMARKS.

Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world, and from the beginning he hath chosen and set apart his ministers and agents, for revealing his will to mankind, and accomplishing the purposes of his moral administration of the universe. St Paul tells us, that he was separated or destined to the apostleship from his mother's womb; and the Lord here says to Jeremiah, 'before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.' In the

spirit of humility, and foreseeing, perhaps, the dangers to which, in the faithful discharge of his duty as a prophet he would infallibly be exposed, Jeremiah was disposed to decline the appointment. After the manner of Moses, he pleaded his incompetency to undertake such an arduous and important office. 'Behold I cannot speak, for I am a child,' unqualified from youth and inexperience. But the Lord sends none a warfare on his own charges, and imposes no duty which he does not give grace and strength to perform. He repels Jeremiah's excuses, renews his commission in terms more peremptory than before, but at the same time encourages him with the assurance of his presence and protection; 'be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.' By a significant symbol, the Lord intimated to him that he would give him a mouth and wisdom, which his adversaries would not be able to gainsay or resist, and he ordained him his prophet, not only to deliver his message to the people of Israel, but to foretell the destruction of wicked and incorrigible nations, and to proclaim his mercy to those who humbled themselves and repented of their evil ways. The first exercise of the prophetic office to which Jeremiah was called was one of a painful nature; it was to denounce the judgments of heaven against his own countrymen. They had forsaken the God of their fathers, and had become the worshippers of heathen idols, and of images of their own formation. The Almighty had determined to punish their wickedness by the invasion of the king of Babylon, and the more northern nations under his sway—within a short period they were to be visited with that calamity. This was intimated to Jeremiah by the vision of a rod or branch of an almond tree, one of the first trees that blossom in the spring; and it was shadowed by a second vision, the agitation and commotion of a boiling pot over a fiery furnace, so adjusted in its position, as to indicate the quarter whence the enemy was to come, and that the affliction was to be of the most awful and overwhelming nature. To denounce this judgment, must have been most distressing to the prophet himself, and he could not be ignorant that it would expose him to the hatred and persecution of a depraved and devoted people. But he was enjoined to address himself to the work assigned him without delay; and (as he valued his own safety) fearlessly and faithfully to deliver the message with which he was charged; whilst for his encouragement, he was assured of defence against all ranks and classes in the land, and that their attempts to destroy him would be ineffectual, 'for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.'

God hath appointed us our several places and relations in life, and whatever may be our station in society, if we earnestly desire and endeavour to please God, and to be accepted of him, he will qualify us for the service which he requires at our hands. We may be called to arduous duty, and placed in perilous circumstances, but precious are the promises in which we are encouraged to hope; 'fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed. for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 56.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH II.

REMARKS.

In this passage of holy writ, the Lord, by the mouth of his prophet, reproves the Israelites for the sin of backsliding, and sets before them the guilt and the danger of that conduct. In the first place, he reminds them of the kindness which he had shown them in the early part of their history, and of their professions of gratitude and allegiance in return. He had delivered them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage; he had covenanted to be their God, and had engaged them to be his people, to serve him in holiness, and to be the first fruits of his faithful worshippers in every succeeding age. He had led them through the wilderness, and had severely punished those nations which attempted to impede their progress; and they had sung his praise on the shores of the Red sea, and at the foot of Sinai had taken hold of his covenant, and dedicated themselves to his service. These things the Lord remembered in their behalf. He would still have delighted to bless them, had they been steadfast and faithful to their engagements; but they had forsaken the God of their fathers, to worship the idols of the heathen, and they persisted in their disloyalty and disobedience. He, therefore, expostulates with them on the ingratitude, the guilt, and the folly of this conduct. They could not allege that their fathers had found him unfaithful to his promises, or unreasonable in his demands; they could not say that his commandments were grievous, and that there was no profit in his service. But they retained no grateful sense of his miraculous interpositions in their behalf, when he guided them through the trackless desert, which was dreary as the shadow of death; when he fed them with manna from heaven, and with water out of the rock, and at length planted them in Canaan, a land fair and fruitful as the garden of God. Instead of living as his devoted and peculiar people, they had defiled the land by the worship of idols, and by the foulest crimes; and this guilt attached not only to the people, but to the priests, the pastors, and the prophets—all were sunk in a state of the grossest ignorance and depravity; they had apostatised from God, and were become the servants of Baal.

Such defection, the prophet tells them, was unknown even among the heathen. They were constant in their adherence to what they called gods, which were, in fact, no gods, but vanity and a lie; but Israel, whose glory it was to know the only true God, and who had been distinguished by him with privileges and blessings above all other nations, had 'forsaken the Lord, had provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, and were gone away backward.' Of such wickedness, how justly does the Lord call upon the heavens to testify their abhorrence and detestation. But their guilt was not greater than their folly. The Lord had acknowledged Israel as his Son and his first-born, and it might have been

expected that this would ensure to them his favour and protection against all their enemies, whereas, the Assyrians and Egyptians had successively triumphed over them, had laid waste their land, and burnt their cities with fire. This the prophet teaches them was the natural consequence and just punishment of their transgressions. And as they were disposed to seek for safety, by forming alliances with these nations, rather than by returning to that God from whom they had deeply revolted, he warns them, that they would be visited with still heavier judgments. 'Thine own wickedness shall correct thee,' &c.

In the latter part of the chapter, the Lord again sets their sins before them in all their enormity and aggravations—repeats his expostulations, and shows them that their guilt would admit neither of excuse nor palliation. But being merciful and full of compassion, he commissions the prophet, in the conclusion of his message, which is carried forward to the 4th verse of the chapter following, to invite them to return, in the assurance that he would show mercy, and pardon abundantly. 'Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father; thou art the guide of my youth.' This invitation he still addresses to us, and to all the apostate children of men. Let us comply with his call, and say with the penitents of old, 'Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God: take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips.'

PRAYER.

O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee would we lift up our souls, for thou art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all that call on thee. Thou hast made goodness and mercy to follow after us all the days of our life. But, alas! we have forgotten the God that made us, and have lightly esteemed the Rock of our salvation. And thou mightest justly have left us to eat the fruit of our own ways, and to be filled with our own devices. But to our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him. In the counsels of eternity thou didst devise a scheme of reconciliation and peace. When the fullness of time was come, thou didst send forth thy Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and in the gospel of salvation thou art addressing us in these gracious words, Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings; return, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you. Turn thou us, O Lord, and we shall be turned, for thou art the Lord our God. Open our eyes to see the vanity of this world, and all its perishing enjoyments. Convince us that they who are far from thee shall perish; and O dispose us all to come unto thee, saying, in the language of the prodigal, Father, we have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and are not worthy to be called

thy children; and do thou, O Lord, embrace us in the arms of thy mercy; restore us to thy family and favour. Say unto us, I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters. I will be merciful to your unrighteousness; your sins and iniquities I will remember no more. Return unto me, for I have redeemed you. And, O Lord, do thou give us the affections and dispositions of thy children. Henceforth may we bow with reverence to thine authority, meekly submit to thy chastisements, study thy will, and render to thee a hearty and a constant obedience, animated and strengthened by thy Spirit. May we be followers of God as dear children, holy as thou art holy, merciful as thou art merciful, perfect as thou our Father in heaven art perfect. May the gospel of Jesus soon be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations. Revive thy work in the midst of us, and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. Heal the sick and comfort the afflicted. When their heart is overwhelmed, lead them to the rock that is higher than they. May all our friends be the friends of God. Be near to those who are far from us. May our prayers meet before thy throne of grace. Thou hast preserved us from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and hast permitted us to see the light of a new day. Lord, lift thou up upon us the light of thy countenance. Quicken us in duty, and prepare us for whatever may be the allotments of thy providence. Whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, may we do all to the glory of God, through Jesus Christ the Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 17.

SCRIPTURE—COLOSSIANS I.

REMARKS.

This epistle seems to have been written to caution the converts at Colosse against some false teachers, who, under the influence of pagan philosophy, and Jewish prejudice, were attempting to introduce among them the worship of angels, and to enforce the observance of the Mosaic ritual, as essential to salvation. After saluting them, St Paul, in his own name, and in the name of Timothy, tells them, that having learned from Epaphras their steadfastness in the faith, and love to their fellow disciples, he gave thanks to God on these accounts, and that it was the subject of his earnest and unceasing prayer, that they might not be disappointed of that blessedness which was laid up for them in heaven, to the hope of which they had been called by the gospel of Jesus.

Epaphras having informed the apostle of their Christian attachment to himself personally, he assures them, that he also bore them on his heart, constantly praying in their behalf for the various blessings specified. These blessings, the apostle teaches them, could not be attained by the Levitical sacrifices, which could neither take away sin, nor make the comers thereunto perfect. They were to be enjoyed only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the shedding of his blood as an atonement for sin, had purchased for his people redemption, and forgiveness, and all spiritual blessings. To satisfy them that the sacrifice which Christ offered up, was a sufficient propitiation for the sins of the whole world, that he had power to forgive sins, and was the sole object of religious worship, to the exclusion of every creature, even the most exalted; he reminds them of his divine excellence and glory, as God manifest in the flesh, the Creator of heaven and earth, and of all their hosts, the Lord and Governor of the universe; he reminds them also of his mediatorial character and dignity, as constituted the supreme Head of the church, the author and the finisher of our faith, and the first who rose from the dead to an endless life. For it was the will of the Father, that this plenitude of essential dignity and mediatorial excellence, should dwell in Christ's mysterious person; that his sacrifice might possess an infinite value and efficacy; that through the satisfaction which he made to offended justice, he might reconcile sinners of all nations to himself, and that he might unite angels and men, Jews and Gentiles, as the willing and obedient subjects of his mediatorial kingdom. In proof of this, the apostle refers to the case of the Colossians themselves. Though by nature they had, in common with other men, been alienated from God, and at enmity with him in their hearts, through faith in the blood of the cross, that enmity had been slain; though aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, they were admitted into fellowship with the saints, and would be accepted as righteous in the day of judgment, if they persevered in the faith and hope of the gospel. This doctrine, St Paul, by divine appointment, had preached to the Colossians and other heathens, enduring persecution from his countrymen on that account, but suffering joyfully, because he was instrumental in bringing Gentiles into the church, thus promoting the end of Christ's suffering, and fulfilling the predictions of his word, that in him all nations of the earth should be blessed. This purpose of mercy, unknown to preceding generations, and therefore styled a mystery, God was pleased to discover to the apostles and other holy men, that they might proclaim to all the world the riches of his grace, displayed in this precious truth, that Christ dwelling in the heart by faith, and by the power of his Spirit, warranted in Gentiles as well as in Jews the hope of eternal glory. Thus did the apostles preach Christ to Jews and Gentiles without distinction, warning all to flee from the wrath to come, instructing them in the way of salvation, as they had themselves been taught by the Spirit of wisdom, and zealous to bring all to him, who was able to present them faultless

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FRIDAY EVENING.

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SCRIPTURE—COLOSSIANS I.

REMARKS.

This epistle seems to have been written to caution the converts at Colosse against some false teachers, who, under the influence of pagan philosophy, and Jewish prejudice, were attempting to introduce among them the worship of angels, and to enforce the observance of the Mosaic ritual, as essential to salvation. After saluting them, St Paul, in his own name, and in the name of Timothy, tells them, that having learned from Epaphras their stedfastness in the faith, and love to their fellow disciples, he gave thanks to God on these accounts, and that it was the subject of his earnest and unceasing prayer, that they might not be disappointed of that blessedness which was laid up for them in heaven, to the hope of which they had been called by the gospel of Jesus.

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before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. In this service, St Paul laboured with peculiar success, for which he takes no credit to himself, but ascribes the glory to the power of the Holy Ghost, which wrought in and by him mightily.

PRAYER.

Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. Who should not fear thee and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil; thou canst not look upon iniquity; and iniquities, we must confess, prevail against us. We have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and are utterly unworthy to approach into thy presence, or to take thy sacred name into our polluted lips. But though we have sinned, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, and who is able to save to the uttermost of all that come unto God by him, because he ever liveth to make intercession for us. In the name, and relying on the intercession of our great High Priest in heaven, would we now prostrate ourselves before thy throne of grace, to implore mercy to pardon, and grace to help in time of need. God be merciful to us sinners. May we have redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of our sins, and may we be reconciled to thee by the death of thy Son. And O may the Holy Spirit take of the things of Christ and show them to us, that we may be filled with admiration of his glory, that we may rely with confidence on his grace and power to save, and may live devoted, soul and body, to his service. Contemplating him as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, as the Creator and Preserver of all things, the Lord of angels and of men, may we honour the Son even as we honour the Father. And may we be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Extend the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom. Hasten the time when the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved. Enlarge and purify our beloved church. May her peace be as a river, and her righteousness as the waves of the sea. Regard the prayer of the destitute, and prepare of thy goodness for the poor. Hear the cry of the distressed, and send help from above. May the dying die in the Lord, that death may be to them the entrance into everlasting life. May those in whom we are specially interested by the ties of nature and affection be the objects of thy special love, thy

paternal care, and saving grace; and enable us to put on bowels of mercy, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another. Thou hast brought us to the close of another day. Lord, teach us so to count our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom. To the Keeper of Israel we commit our souls, and our bodies, and all our concerns, through the night. May the eye that never slumbers watch over us, and underneath us be the everlasting arms. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXV.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH VI.

REMARKS.

The prophet in this chapter continues to warn the Israelites of their impending captivity in Babylon; the children of Benjamin being associated with the tribe of Judah, and those measures being recommended to them, which they would employ in a case of rival invasion. Zion is likened to a comely and delicate woman, who had been preserved hitherto from evil; but was soon to be exposed to the horrors of cruel war. These calamities are traced to the great wickedness of Jerusalem, which abounded in iniquity, as a fountain sends forth streams of water. Yet, while the Lord pronounced the punishment that would fall on the people, if their sins were not forsaken, he tenderly besought them to be instructed, that he might not depart from them. Should, however, their impenitence continue, the land would be laid waste, and fresh desolations would rapidly follow each other; as the grapes of the vineyards are not only gathered but gleaned. Among those who are charged with peculiar guilt, are the prophets and priests, who 'dealt falsely with the people,' and healed their hurt slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace; when there is no peace.'

Let us be instructed by these warnings of the prophet. If we do not repent and believe the gospel; if we meet in a spirit of stern defiance the advances toward reconciliation made to us by our Father in heaven; the Lord will visit us with his righteous indignation. Let us pray that his 'soul may not depart from us,' that we may not perish in our own corruption; but that the Holy Spirit may incline us to accept his gracious offers. Pastors who unrighteously conceal the truth, and who do not bring 'the terrors of the Lord' before their people, to persuade them, are involved in guilt of the deepest dye. It is their duty to mourn over the sins of the impenitent in their flocks, and from a love to their souls, to be earnest in calling them to faith and repentance. Were they only to pass over the feelings with which they may be regarded by the careless in this world, and to consider the feelings with which they shall be regarded, when they, and all who are

under their pastoral care meet at the bar of God, they would never shun 'to declare the whole counsel of God.'

The prophet exhorts the people, 'stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and ye shall find rest to your souls;' and because they would not walk therein—because they refused to tread in the pious steps of their fathers, he declares that their incense and offering would be rejected; that fear and anguish would be on every side, and that they would be destroyed, as reprobate silver is consumed in the fire.

Those ages that are farthest advanced in knowledge and refinement, are not always most distinguished for vital godliness. In order to find the era in the history of the chosen people in which God was most faithfully worshipped and obeyed, an Israelite, in the days of Jeremiah, had to go back to the times of Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and David; and a Christian, in order to see his most holy faith shining in its brightest lustre, must often leave his own age and return to earlier and more primitive times; to the age of the apostles, when the danger incurred by the profession of faith in Christ, deterred hypocrites and formalists from entering within the pale of the church; and to the era of the reformation, when religion held a more prominent place in men's thoughts, and exercised a more powerful sway over the lives of believers than it has done in later times, and when the gospel was recognized as furnishing the principles which should regulate their conduct in all the scenes of domestic and social life. Let us ask for the old paths—let us walk in the good way—let us follow our fathers in all things wherein they followed Christ, that we may find rest to our souls.

PRAYER.

Most gracious God, we, thy frail and dependent creatures, would present our united thanksgivings for the mercies of the past night, and the light of this morning. We lay down and slept, we awoke, for thou the Lord sustainedst us. And now, that we are entering upon the duties of the day, we should seek thy guidance, and commit ourselves to thy care. O Lord, we confess that we are unworthy of the least of thy mercies; for we are partakers of a fallen nature, and are chargeable with many violations of thy holy law. Enter not into judgment with us. Let not our iniquities be remembered before thee, but blot them out for the sake of him whom thou hearest always, and for whom thou art ready to forgive the chief of sinners. May Christ be made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. May we be instructed by the scriptures which he inspired; may we be animated by the spirit which he breathed; may we be cultivating the graces which he exhibited; may we at all times be seeking to be meet for the mansions which he hath gone to prepare for his people. O Lord, let us always remember that thou art

faithful in thy threatenings, and that thy judgments shall fall on the impenitent and ungodly. Lord, teach us to see the evil nature and bitter fruits of sin, that, knowing how much it dishonoureth thee, and how ruinous it is to our own souls, we may depart from all iniquity. Cause us to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning, for in thee do we trust; cause us to know the way wherein we should walk, for we lift up our souls unto thee. Thy thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are thy ways our ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are thy ways higher than our ways, and thy thoughts than our thoughts. Grant, O Lord, that we may be encouraged by thy merciful invitations, returning to thee that thou mayest have mercy upon us, and that thou mayest abundantly pardon. May a sense of thy goodness subdue our obdurate hearts, and may we hereafter glorify thee in our souls and in our bodies which are thine. Enable us, O Lord, to look back with profit upon those ages of thy church that were most distinguished for faith and holiness. And while we find examples of many in early times who witnessed a good confession in the world, let us copy their patterns, and seek to grow in their manifold graces, yielding in meek submission to thy holy will, contending for the faith that was once delivered to the saints, and confessing that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, whose great endeavour should be, to be travelling toward the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. To thee, the God of all comfort, we commend those of our brethren who are visited with trial, beseeching thee to heal their sorrows, so that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Bless all who are connected with us by the ties of nature, and the bonds of grace. O Lord, may thy grace descend on all conditions of men, so that they may choose the good part that cannot be taken away, and lay hold on eternal life. And now, to thee the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed all glory and honour. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIV. 8.

SCRIPTURE—COLOSSIANS II.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Paul, while in prison at Rome, assures the Christians at Colosse, that he fervently prayed they might advance in Christian knowledge, and grow in the

practice of Christian virtues,—a prayer which we should ever offer in behalf of our brethren, and which we should prove to be sincere, by our use of those means through which they may be encouraged in the faith and obedience of the gospel. With great earnestness he warns them against corrupting the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, by blending the theories of a vain philosophy with the glorious discoveries of the gospel. The doctrine which science, 'falsely so called,' was most prone to disparage, was that of Christ's divine nature, and hence the apostle declares that great mystery of godliness in the clearest manner, throughout the chapter, especially in the 3d and 9th verses, in which he says, 'in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;' 'in him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily;' expressions which are as strong as can be conceived, and which show that Christ is the same in substance with the Father, equal in power and glory: and in order to persuade them how entirely their favour and comfort depended on this truth, Paul shows that it was only from their union with Christ as their head, that they were complete in spiritual blessings, pardoned, sanctified, and redeemed. If you are truly united to Christ by faith, how consolatory is this truth to your minds. There is no degree of guilt that the blood of sprinkling cannot wash away. There is no hardened sinner that cannot be pardoned through such unspeakable merits. There is no want of your spiritual nature that cannot be supplied by so exalted a Redeemer. Christ can save to the uttermost all that come to the Father through him; he can guide you by his counsel, and afterward receive you into glory. Well might Paul describe the death of Christ, as the event by which he saved his people from the curse of the law! Well might he borrow his imagery from the manner of Roman triumphs, and declare that it was in his cross that Christ spoiled principalities and powers, and led, as captives at his chariot wheels, all the spiritual enemies of his people!

As the ceremonial law was fulfilled at Christ's death, which was prefigured in its sacrifices and symbols, it is no longer binding on the followers of Christ. This abrogation of the ritual law does not, however, extend to those commandments which are essentially moral and spiritual in their nature. The ordinance of the sabbath, in particular, preceded the Mosaic dispensation, was enjoined in the moral law, and is subservient to the good of God's servants in all ages of the church. From a regard to God's honour, and our own spiritual profit, it ought to be hallowed in our hearts and lives.

Christ being the only name through whom there is access to the Father, it is not permitted us to approach him through created beings, however exalted and holy. 'There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.' We are not, therefore, to impeach the dignity of his office, or to discredit the offering of his prayers, by giving that honour to another which belongs to him alone. But believing in him not only as having died for his people on earth, but as *now interceding* for them in heaven, we are to

come to the Father solely in his name, and pleading solely the merits of his obedience and death. And while we guard against worshipping God in any way not appointed in his word, we are to be equally careful that our fidelity in his service may not show itself in any penances that God hath not required, but in those acts of holy obedience that can alone evidence the power of religion in our souls.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most merciful God, who hast watched over us during the engagements of this day, vouchsafe to us thy grace, while we present before thee our prayers at its close. Help us to worship thee who art a spirit, in spirit and in truth; and grant that in all our approaches to thy throne of mercy, we may look to be heard and regarded only through the merits of our once crucified but now exalted Lord. O Lord, do thou enable us with the docility of children, to receive into our understandings and hearts all the discoveries of thy holy word, as coming from thee the Father of lights, and as necessary to be believed and obeyed for our everlasting welfare. Great, O Lord, is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. May we see this truth to be the only foundation for peace of mind; may we regard it as proving the efficacy of Christ's atoning blood. And grant that we, believing in his greatness and glory, as the Son of God; and in his compassion and mercy, as the Son of man; may through him receive the remission of our manifold sins, and enjoy that peace of mind which passeth all understanding, and which flows from faith in thee as a reconciled Father. May we, O Lord, be delivered out of the hands of all our enemies; may we be saved from the devil, and the world, and the flesh; and may we serve thee without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives. Let us, O Lord, stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free; yet ever reverence and ever regard as of perpetual obligation all those ordinances which are enjoined in thy word, and which may prepare us for serving thee on earth, and for enjoying thee in heaven. O Lord, we confess the hold which the world hath over us, how prone we are to be allured by its pleasures, and distracted by its cares, and we desire, now that the business of the week is closing, to bless thee for the appointment of the Sabbath, and for the prospect we have of entering on its holy engagements. Spread around us the shield of thy protection during the silence of the night, and preserve us, if it be thy good

pleasure, to the light of another day of the Son of man. And grant, most merciful Father, that thy blessing may so abundantly descend on the religious exercises of the Sabbath, that our souls may be prepared by them for an everlasting Sabbath in heaven. Convey the glad tidings of redemption to all the tribes of men, and let the banners of the cross be unfurled in every land. In thee, O Lord, all the families of the earth are blessed. Be pleased to bless all the members of this family, and grant that we may all have one faith and one Lord; so that we who are travelling through the world together on earth, may be heirs together of thy kingdom above. Let our prayers, O Lord, go up before thee as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as an evening sacrifice, acceptable through the mediation of Jesus Christ, our ever-blessed Redeemer. Amen.

FORTIETH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 15—18.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CXII. CXIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

PSALM CXII. presents to us the character and condition of a renewed and sanctified man. For it is only he who is the subject of divine grace, that will both fear the Lord, and delight greatly in his commandments. There is a conformity in him to the image of the Saviour, whose 'meat' it was 'to do the will of God.' The blessedness of such a man is set forth, ver. 1—9. and the remarkable thing is, that however he may be circumstanced, still he is blessed. Not that he has not troubles even as other men. The psalm speaks of 'darkness,' and 'evil tidings,' and 'enemies,' to him. But when grace reigns in the heart, it makes all welcome that God is pleased to send. It finds a blessing, where worldly men experience only distress. It communicates joys, which ordinary tribulations cannot take away. He 'that delighteth greatly in God's commandments,' has that which makes him happy, although the things of the world do not belong to him. But he is blessed also in what he possesses of them. He is blessed in his family—the generation of the upright—trained up in the knowledge of God's will, and becoming 'strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,' ver. 2. He is blessed in his outward circumstances, which, whether affluent or otherwise, are sufficient for his moderate desires; and which, even when most abundant, have not the effect of withdrawing him from a humble reliance on that righteousness which is man's only ground of acceptance with God, ver. 3. He is blessed in the comfort which his faith and hope afford him in the time of affliction, and in the

improvement which he makes of the chastening of the Lord, ver. 4. He is blessed in his friendly intercourse with others; in the respect that he meets with; in the serenity of his temper; and in the support, which, when misrepresented, or threatened with evil, or looking forward to approaching dissolution, he receives from his habitual trust in that gracious and omnipotent Saviour who knows his people, and has said of them that 'they shall never perish,' and will ultimately bruise both their enemies and his under his feet, ver. 5—9. The close of the psalm is fitted to heighten our conceptions of the blessedness of godly men, by exhibiting to us, as if in contrast, the condition of the wicked, whose own bad passions are a torment to them, who meet with much to disappoint them in their schemes of earthly happiness, and to whom a coming futurity is enveloped in appalling gloom, ver. 10.

PSALM CXIII. fixes our attention upon the glorious majesty of God, ver. 4, 5; and on his wonderful condescension to the children of men, ver. 6. Instances may be mentioned, in which God, in the kindness of his providence, has literally done such gracious acts as are spoken of, ver. 7—9. But it is in the dispensation of grace, that the statements there made are most amply verified. We are all sunk in sin. Yet doth he 'that dwelleth on high,' and whose glory and felicity our condition cannot affect, bring us up 'out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay.' The 'poor' and 'needy,' are those whom he specially favours. 'God giveth grace unto the humble.' The Gentile world, too, which Isaiah addresses 'as a barren woman,' (liv. 1.) on account of its unfruitfulness toward God, has been made 'a joyful mother of children.' Nor does God limit 'his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus,' to mere deliverance from our wretched condition. He sets us 'with princes, even with the princes of his people.' He admits us to the glorious liberty of his children; and having 'made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,' he will bring us to dwell with them in his presence for ever.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

How comforting is it to the mind, under a sense of our own helplessness and guilt, to think that it belongs to the character of God to 'lift the needy out of the dunghill;' and that no depth of misery can prevent him from administering the aid which we require! In all our efforts for the spiritual welfare of others, we should take encouragement, from knowing that God himself is concerned to promote it, and that, as 'his name is to be praised from the rising of the sun, unto the going down of the same,' we must be rightly employed in endeavouring to accomplish this object.

PRAYER.

Most gracious God, who, in tenderness to man, hast appointed one day in seven to be a holy sabbath to thyself, we praise and bless thee that our sleep has not been the sleep of death, and that a Christian sabbath has again returned to us. May we be in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and in all our religious exercises may we

glorify him who is the Lord of the sabbath. Keep us from profaning thy day, by either the omission or the careless performance of its duties. May it be a day of refreshing to our souls from the presence of the Lord. May we have larger views of thy love to us through Jesus Christ, and of our duty to thee. May we be made more fully aware of our lost condition by sin, and of the great salvation which was wrought by him, who put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. May our admiration of the excellence of Christ in his divine nature, and his holy character, and his various offices, as prophet, priest, and king to his people, increase more and more. May we experience more of the work of the Spirit in our hearts, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, bringing about a conformity to the image of Christ, and producing its blessed fruits of faith, hope, and charity. Make the sabbath, O Lord, to be more reverently and devoutly observed throughout the land. May every attempt to violate its sacredness, be discouraged by men of influence and power; and may the poor become sensible of its value, to both their temporal and their eternal welfare. Avert, we beseech thee, the judgments which our abounding iniquities have provoked. Pour out a spirit of repentance and reformation upon the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the old and the young. Suffer us not to imagine that our state is secure, because riches increase, or arts are improved, or our munitions are strong. May it be graven on our minds that a nation prospers, and individuals are blessed, in proportion as the law of the Lord is revered. Let it not be our condemnation that we have forsaken thy law, and are walking after the imaginations of our own hearts. May the pride of self-righteousness be removed from us, and may we be so thoroughly convinced of our sinfulness and guilt, that we may thankfully accept of the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, and may glory in nothing save in his cross. May the ministers of Christ have grace to be faithful in warning their people to flee from the wrath to come, and in bringing them to know the Lord, who delighteth in loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, and exercises these things in the earth. Go with us, and our fellow-worshippers, this day to thy sanctuary, and show us thy salvation. Comfort and revive with thy presence, all those who are prevented from engaging in the solemnities of thy house. Uphold and direct our pastor in discharging his sacred duties; and let all our devotional exercises

throughout the day be productive of the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. Hear, O Lord, and forgive, and accept of us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCVI. 1—5.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CXIV. CXV.

REMARKS.

PSALM CXIV. celebrates the care which God exercised over Israel, when he brought them out of Egypt, and the mighty miracles which he wrought for them. It is highly poetical, and very beautiful, representing inanimate objects as endued with life, overawed by the presence of God, and obedient to his will. It shows the omnipotence of God, and the security of his people under his protection. It teaches his people, that whatever be their state, he is able to 'deliver them out of all their troubles.' And it should lead them not only to tremble before him, but also to trust in him. In the deliverance which was effected for Israel from the bondage of Egypt, we may contemplate the deliverance which has been wrought for us from the bondage of sin. The same Lord was the author of both. The Saviour of sinners was that glorious being who 'was in the beginning with God,' and who 'was God.' His stupendous miracles betokened 'the presence of the Lord.' The earth, and the sea, and the things that are therein, were obedient to him. His power was acknowledged even by 'the rulers of the darkness of this world.' His language to his people is, 'when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.' He has made a way for them to enter into the heavenly Canaan; and during all their pilgrimage in the wilderness of life, he sustains, and comforts, and invigorates them by his grace, 1 Cor. x. 1—4. Let us trust in this Saviour, and humbly and thankfully commit ourselves to him. Let us beware of resisting or grieving his Spirit. Let us ask of him continually that he would take us, as he took Judah and Israel of old, to be 'his sanctuary,' and 'his dominion,' Heb. xii. 25.

PSALM CXV. begins with the language of deep humility and earnest prayer. The church expresses its desire, that deliverance might be brought to it from great and overwhelming distress, and that God would make his glorious perfections manifest in effecting it. Deliverance was to be looked for only from God in the exercise of his abounding mercy, and it was desirable for the vindication of his character and truth, ver. 1. For were it withheld, the heathen might consider that God was unable to effect it, or was unacquainted with the circumstances of his church, ver. 2. But the psalmist, speaking in the name of the church, repels this impious idea, and confirms himself in his dependence upon God by

recalling to his mind the superintending providence which he exercises over the universe, ver. 3; and by drawing a very striking contrast between the living, ever-watchful God, who, according to his pleasure, sustains and governs all; and the useless idols which the heathen worshipped and held entitled to their confidence, ver. 4—8. He then, in very animated terms, exhorts all, whether priests or people, whether connected with the house of Israel, or proselytes and strangers, to trust in the Lord Jehovah, ver. 9—11. He mentions grounds for trust in the Lord, ver. 12; and speaks not doubtfully, but with lively faith, and in prophetic terms, of blessings to the church, ver. 12—15; and closes the psalm with solemn reflections on man's condition upon earth, and a devout expression of his own purpose, under every circumstance, to bless the Lord, ver. 16—18. The difference of tone between the commencement and the close of the psalm, is very remarkable. There is throughout the whole of it the exercise of faith. But the psalmist rises from a state of deep depression, to one of grateful exultation. The difference appears to have been produced by meditation on the perfections of God, and especially on his kindness towards us. 'Our God is in the heavens.' 'The Lord hath been mindful of us.' Thence flow the church's confidence in God, and the certainty with which it looks for blessings. When times of depression occur to us, and spiritual sorrows weigh upon our minds, let us apply to the same remedy which is suggested to us here. 'The Lord hath been mindful' also 'of us.' We all have reason to say so, even in regard to temporal concerns: and how true is it in regard to our spiritual state! 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.' 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'

PRAYER.

O thou, who didst breathe into our nostrils the breath of life, and by whose kind visitation we are preserved and blessed, we give thee thanks for all thy temporal mercies, and we humbly pray, that in whatsoever measure thou art pleased to supply them, we may acknowledge thine undeserved goodness, and may show forth thy praise, by living in obedience to thy law. O thou, who art the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who, according to thine abundant mercy, hast begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of thy Son from the dead, we give thee thanks that thou hast quickened us together with Christ, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. May that spiritual life which we derive from thee, be cherished and sustained by the gracious influences of the Holy Ghost. Having raised us from the death of sin, and mortified within us the desires of the flesh, may he enable us to set our affections on things above, and to be continually advancing to a greater meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

May he render us watchful against sinful thoughts, and sinful words, and sinful deeds, which bring down the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. May he render us diligent in exercising and improving humbleness of mind, meekness, charity, and all the other graces, which are the ornaments of thine elect. May he prepare our hearts for receiving the word of Christ; and so accompany the reading and the preaching of the word with his own demonstration, that it may be quick and powerful in enlightening our understandings, and directing our conduct. May love to the Saviour so dwell within us, that whatsoever we do, we may do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. In all the relations of life may we strive to adorn his doctrine. In our social and domestic intercourse, and in every situation in which we are called to act, may we maintain the dispositions and the character of those who serve the Lord Christ, and who hope through him to receive the reward of the inheritance. We give thee thanks, O Lord, for the comfort which we have enjoyed, and the instructions which we have received from the exercises and employments of thy holy day. Pardon wherein we have sinned in our religious services. Bless them to us and to our fellow-worshippers; and as sabbath after sabbath returns, may the Lord make us to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, to the end he may stablish our hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. We pray for the good of our country, and for our sovereign. We pray for the good of our church, and the universal diffusion of the blessings of the gospel of Christ. May they be the portion of all who labour under affliction. May they be the portion of every member of this family, and of every friend and relation that we have. Watch, O Lord, around our bed while we sleep, and whether we wake or sleep, may we be accepted with thee, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXV. 6—11.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH IX.

REMARKS.

The prophet bewails, in very pathetic terms, the calamities that were about to befall his countrymen, ver. 1. All the statements that are made throughout the chapter, respecting these calamities, are indicative of their extreme severity. 'The slain,' ver.

1; 'cities desolate without an inhabitant,' ver. 11; 'the land burnt up, like a wilderness, that none passeth through,' ver. 12; the people scattered and oppressed among the heathen, ver. 16—19; pestilence raging among them, and the destruction of life so terrible, that the dead cover the land, and there is none to bury them, ver. 20—22. One circumstance, in connection with eastern manners, is particularly expressive of the sad and overwhelming nature of these calamities, ver. 17, 18. Mourning women were hired in on occasions of death in a family, (see Matt. ix. 23, 24.) Their melancholy tones, and their loud and continued wailing, were suited to the feeling of the survivors; and, at such times, were deemed as indispensable by the Jews, as our ordinary demonstrations of sorrow are by us. The call for 'the mourning women,' showed that the destruction which hung over Judea was not to be evaded, and that when it came, it would make 'every one teach her neighbour lamentation.'

The great practical question for us is, what was the cause of these direful calamities, which made the prophet feel as if weeping day and night for his people should be his sole occupation. The cause is stated again and again to have been their enormous and universal wickedness. It is so stated by the prophet, who, notwithstanding the affection which he bore to his people, would have preferred the solitude of the wilderness, with no other dwelling-place than the rude and temporary shelter which was used by the way-faring man, to remaining among them, and being 'vexed with their unlawful deeds,' ver. 2, 3. It is so stated by the Lord himself, who mentions their sins in detail, and charges them with forsaking his law, and reiterates his awful purpose to 'visit them for these things,' ver. 3—5, 6, 9, 12—16. The majesty of God cannot be offended with impunity. National distress, and individual suffering, are the bitter fruits of not obeying his voice. But what were the sins which called forth his judgments in their case? Let us look to our own ways; for, alas! the sins which brought destruction upon Judah, are the very sins with which our own land, and we ourselves, may be charged. Adultery, ver. 2; 'lies,' 'slanders,' 'deceit' in all its varied forms, disregard of God, increase of crime, ver. 3—6; 'walking after the imagination of their own heart,' ver. 14; 'glorying' in such things as 'wisdom, and might, and riches,' ver. 23; being 'uncircumcised in the heart,' ver. 26. (see Rom. ii. 28, 29.) These are sins which are not by any means peculiar to the Jews; and if God will 'be avenged' for such things, well may the people of our land, and every member of every family within it, be humbled, and alarmed, and cry earnestly to God, 'if, peradventure, he would give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.' There is one charge against the Jews which is repeatedly mentioned, and which must consequently be offensive to God in a more than ordinary degree. 'They know not me, saith the Lord,' ver. 3; 'they refuse to know me, saith the Lord,' ver. 6; 'they have forsaken my law which I set before them,' ver. 13. There is an intimate connection between the disowning of God,

or the refusing to know him, and the practice of sin. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.' We are expressly told, that because men 'did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind,' Rom. i. 28. So will it always be. When pains are not taken to keep up a knowledge of God, as he has been revealed to us by his Son, there will be a forsaking of his law, and a proceeding 'from evil to evil,' that will bring down the judgments of God. It is the knowledge of God in Christ, as a perfectly holy and righteous being, who 'will by no means clear the guilty,' but is full of compassion and gracious, and will admit us to his favour through the merits and intercession of his Son, that puts an end to every thing like pride and vain glory, and makes the things of this world, in whatever abundance they are enjoyed, be regarded as talents to be used in his service. When pride exists, or any thing like glorying in our own, or our country's greatness, influence, attainments, or wealth, God is either altogether unknown, or is very imperfectly known; and there is room for the solemn warning, ver. 23, 24. Let us humbly and diligently avail ourselves of every means for growing 'in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Let it be our object, by our example and our endeavours, to bring all around us to know the Lord. So may we hope that his judgments will be averted from ourselves and our land; and, as is most tenderly expressed in regard to the 'daughter of his people,' ver. 7. his purpose in regard to us, in subjecting us to 'the furnace of affliction,' will be, not to be avenged upon us, but to make 'the trial of our faith—unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, thou dwellest on high, and thy glory is above the heavens. Thou inhabitest eternity, and art supremely and unchangeably happy in thyself. The services of men and of angels can add nothing to thee. Their transgressions cannot lessen thy glory. Who is like unto thee, that humblest thyself to behold even the things that are in heaven? Yet thou hast respect unto the lowly upon earth; yea, thou dwellest with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the spirit of the contrite ones. Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us. Our hope is in thee. We are poor and needy; and we adore and praise thee that thou dost regard the prayer of the destitute, and dost not despise their prayer. We thank thee also, that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, through whom we can come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Behold, O God, our shield, and look on the face of thine Anointed, that we, believing in him, may find favour in thy sight.

May we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. May our wants be supplied out of his fullness, that we may be as men of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. May his Spirit help our infirmities, so that our feet may be set as on a rock, and our goings may be established in the way of thy commandments. May we know the blessedness of them that fear thee, and delight in thy law. In our intercourse with others, and in all our temporal enjoyments, may we be kept from the evil which the things of the world are apt to beget. In tribulation, may the hope of the gospel be as the anchor of our souls, sure and steadfast. Depending upon thee, as reconciled to us by the death of thy Son, and providing for us with a father's care, may we be enabled to possess our souls with patience. May the changes of life be borne with cheerful submission to thee; and may the approach of death be regarded, not as the extinction of our joys, but as the period of our entering into peace, to be for ever with the Lord. As members of a family, we offer grateful thanks for thy kindness in preserving us to another day, and allowing us again to meet at the throne of grace. Be with us, O Lord, in all our out-goings and in-comings, to direct our ways, and keep us from evil. May blessings, even showers of blessings, descend upon our kindred, our neighbours, and our friends. Show tokens for good to those who are in trouble. Be favourable to our land, and to all who rule over us. Prosper our Zion; and give effect to the means that are employed for extending the knowledge of thyself, and of thy great salvation; that from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, thy name may be praised. Hear us, O Lord, in these our prayers, and answer us in thy mercy, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LVI. 4—7.

SCRIPTURE—COLOSSIANS III.

REMARKS.

It is implied, in the opening words of this chapter, that by nature we are 'dead in trespasses and sins;' and the same truth is expressly stated, ver. 3. But Christians are not left in this sad condition. They are 'quickened' by the Spirit of God, and enabled by him to 'walk in newness of life.' This spiritual change is spoken of, ver. 9, 10. It is declared to be indispensable for all Christians, whatever be the country to which they belong, or the condition which they occupy on earth, ver. 11. And throughout

these three verses it is held forth as a reason for their maintaining a line of conduct directly opposite to what they followed in their unregenerated state. All the precepts which the chapter contains, are addressed to them on the supposition of their being 'risen with Christ;' for it is then only that any attainments in holiness can be made. And we may consider the great object of the chapter to be to exhibit the character of those who, by divine grace, have been 'begotten again,' and are become 'alive unto God.'

They are remarkable, ver. 1, 2. for the elevation of their sentiments and views. They put a high value 'on things above,' and they seek them with unabated ardour. They have every encouragement to do so from the exaltation of the Saviour, and the endearing connection which subsists between him and his people. He will not fail to assist them in their holy aspirations, and 'to give them an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.' Intimately connected with this are their constant endeavours to subdue all sinful propensities and habits, ver. 5—9; and to cultivate the lowly and forbearing disposition which becomes those who have the Spirit of Christ, ver. 12—14. Expecting forgiveness through him for themselves, they shrink from harbouring an angry and unforgiving disposition to others. Theirs is the charity which 'beareth all things.' Having 'peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,' there is produced in their minds a heavenly and abiding calm, which they are careful that resentful passions do not disturb, ver. 15. The sentiments which they breathe are the very opposite to unkindness, ver. 16, 17. Dependence upon Christ as the only 'Mediator between God and man,' a constant reference to him as 'the way' which all must employ for access to the Father; gratitude to God by him; regard for his glory; admiration of his word; concern for the welfare of others; these are sentiments which cannot give birth to either unkindly words, or unkindly deeds. They are sentiments which never lose their hold upon Christians. Their influence is acknowledged in all situations, in the more private intercourse of life as well as in public, and, most of all, in those various domestic relations which afford the best and largest scope for the expression of Christian love, ver. 18—22. By the affectionate and assiduous manner in which relative duties are observed, Christians 'adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.' They know that their condition is appointed by him who is their Lord, and the Lord of all; and they perform their duties not merely with the view of satisfying men, but with the higher object of giving glory to God, ver. 23. They know that whether their station is humble or exalted, they are all the servants of 'the Lord Jesus Christ;' that they have all to render an account to him; and that if they are 'faithful unto death,' they have all to look from him for 'the reward of the inheritance.'

This chapter is a manual for Christians. They cannot study it too often. It shows not only what are their duties, but in what spirit they should be performed. Above all it directs them to the great source from which ability to discharge them is de-

rived, ver. 3, 4. Union with Christ must be steadfastly maintained, (John xv. 4, 5.) The life which we live in the flesh, we must live by the faith of the Son of God. We must go in his strength, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only; living in him, and by him, seeking grace from him; and walking after his Spirit, we shall find that he will neither fail nor forsake us. He will perfect that which concerns us here; and when the period of the great consummation arrives, and he shall appear to gather his elect, we also shall appear with him in glory.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the living and the true God. Thou art possessed of every perfection, and all thy perfections are infinite. Thou didst create all things by the word of thy power. Thy throne is in heaven, and thy dominion ruleth over all. Thou art every where present. Thou art acquainted with the circumstances of all thy creatures, and thou art ever doing them good. Thou hast been mindful of us; and we render hearty thanks for the great and unwearied kindness of thy providence. Thou hast supplied all our wants. Thou hast relieved us from many difficulties. Thou hast given us much enjoyment in life. Thou hast been mindful of us; and how shall we express the gratitude that is due for the riches of thy grace! Thou didst effect the deliverance of thy chosen Israel from their bondage of old, and didst manifest thy kindness to them by marvellous interpositions in their behalf. But how much greater is the deliverance which thou hast effected for us from the bondage of sin; and how much more hast thou magnified thy mercy to us, in sending thine only begotten Son to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons! Adored be thy name, for all the signs and the wonders which assure us that God did set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, and that God has accepted him as such. Adored be thy name, that when he had offered the one sacrifice of himself for sins, he was raised from the dead by the mighty power of God, and exalted by thy right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Thou hast commended thy love toward us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us. Thou hast not spared thine own Son, but hast delivered him up for us all. By him thou art giving us exceeding great and precious promises; and with him thou wilt freely give us all things that pertain unto life and godliness. May we be rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, abounding therein with thanksgiving. May our

convictions of the love of the Saviour be deep and abiding, that we may praise him while we live, and trust in him continually as our help and our shield. May he dwell in our hearts by his Spirit, and bring us wholly under his dominion, that we may be a willing people unto him in the beauties of holiness. May that church which he purchased with his blood, be blessed of the Lord in its people and its priests. May the light of true religion shine within it; and may numbers be added to it daily of such as shall be saved. Make Gentiles and Jews to tremble at the presence of the Lord, and to own him as the God of their salvation. May all whom thou art pleased to chasten, be brought to trust in that Lord who will bless them that fear him, both small and great. May it be the experience of every member of this family, and of all to whom we are tenderly attached, that we are blessed of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. To thy fatherly care do we commit ourselves through the night. Forgive all our sins, and accept of us for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 4.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH XII.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

In the five first verses at the beginning of this chapter, the prophet expostulates with God regarding the prosperity of the wicked. In the remaining part of the chapter, God condescends to answer the inquiries of his servant. Jeremiah had been exposed to imminent danger by the faithful delivering of the Lord's message to the people, and by his affectionate warnings to them to repent, so that the threatened judgments might be averted. As he was conscious that he was influenced by the purest motives, in his endeavours to instruct and reclaim them, he seems to have been surprized and agitated by the unrelenting hostility of his enemies, to whom he could have made an appeal like that of the apostle 'am I therefore your enemy, because I tell you the truth.' While, therefore, he declares his faith in the rectitude of God's government, he beseeches the Almighty, to lay open to him the reasons of his permitting the wicked to triumph over the just. To them, as deriding his predictions, he traced the unbelief of the great mass of the people, and he inquired, why they were not punished, that his countrymen might be deterred from following their pernicious ways.

To this expostulation, the Lord answers, by informing the prophet that calamities were about to happen, far greater than those by which his mind was disquieted, and which would put his faith to far

severer trial. God was about 'to forsake his temple,' and 'leave his heritage;' the surrounding nations were about to assault the land of Judah, as the flocks of birds attack a fowl of strange and speckled plumage.

Still, however, the Gentile nations would not be permitted to pass unpunished, although they were chosen as the instruments of inflicting God's judgments on his rebellious people. They would be visited with his displeasure, and the Israelites would be restored to their own land. Even to the Gentiles, indeed, mercy is promised if they believed in the only true God, and in that Saviour that was to come into the world.

The great lesson to be taken by the followers of Christ from these declarations, is that of never distrusting the wisdom and goodness of their Father in heaven. Though the wicked may seem to prosper in the world, their happiness is only apparent; for so long as they are separated from God, they cannot possess those enjoyments which are alone able to satisfy the desires of rational and immortal beings. And though the people of God may be subjected to many trials, their sufferings are appointed for the promotion of their spiritual good. Their graces are refined in affliction, as gold comes forth purified from the fire. If, notwithstanding our care to walk in wisdom towards them that are without, we are reproached for the sake of Christ and his gospel, we may feel persuaded that some great and good end is to be secured by those anxieties and troubles we have to bear; that our minds are to be more bent down to lowly resignation, that our faith is to be strengthened, that our hope is to be enlivened, and that we are, by the discipline of God's providence, to be led to adorn more fully the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. And while Christians have this assurance regarding the purpose of all the troubles they endure, they have also the promise, 'if we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with him,' 'if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.' Their sorrows are like the fleecy clouds which gather around the rising sun; their joys are like the light of the sun itself, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Wherefore, let us take with patience the chastening of the Lord; let us trust in him as reigning over the world through the mediation of his Son; let us rejoice in the victories which his gospel is to gain in every nation under heaven; and let us look forward to the time when that which is in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall come.

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever blessed God, in whose hands is the breath of every living thing, and the soul of all mankind, we desire this morning to pour out our hearts before thee in prayer. Every day presents us with fresh tokens of thy goodness, and renewed memorials of thy grace. When thou upholdest us by thy Spirit, we are able to rejoice in our strength; when thou withdrawest thy face we are troubled, and go down to the dust whence we came. Above all, O

Lord, we would bless thee for thy saving mercy manifested towards us in Jesus Christ. Herein indeed, is love, not that we loved thee, but that thou lovedst us, and gavest thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have eternal life. O the height, and the depth, and the breadth, and the length of thy love, shown to us in not sparing thine own Son, but delivering him up to the death for us all. May our minds be enlightened by the discoveries of thy word. May our hearts be enriched by the visitations of thy grace, so that we may sincerely believe in the Saviour, and thankfully embrace his great salvation. May we renounce all refuges of lies, to lean on the only name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. May we stand as suppliants at the foot of the cross, confessing our lost condition, and asking humbly for pardon and redemption as thy free and unmerited gifts, through the mediation of thy blessed Son. O Lord, do thou open our understandings, to learn the unsearchable riches of thy grace. Do thou dispose our hearts to love and serve thee. May the Holy Spirit deliver us from the dominion of evil, and restore us to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. O Lord, we acknowledge that the ways of thy providence seem often dark to our weak and ignorant minds. Let not our souls be disquieted within us, when thy dispensations are beyond the reach of our limited knowledge. Enable us, in the most perplexing difficulties, and under the most painful trials, to preserve a firm faith in thee, as ordering all things after the counsel of thine own will, and over-ruling all events for thine own glory, and for the spiritual good of thy believing people. Teach us, O Lord, to possess our souls in patience, and give to us the blessedness of the man whose mind is stayed upon the Lord, and whose spirit is joyful in the God of his salvation. Hasten, O Lord, the time foretold by the prophets, when every form of idolatry shall be overthrown, when the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, when the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Most merciful Father, let thy blessing descend on all who are laid on beds of languishing, and let thy mercy be extended to them that are appointed to die. Watch over our friends, to keep them from the evils that are in the world, and to enrich them abundantly with spiritual blessings. O Lord prepare us for the duties of this day, let our lives be spent in thy fear, and let us be received at death into glory, for the sake of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

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TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 4.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH XVII.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

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PRAYER.

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Lord, we would bless thee for thy saving mercy manifested towards us in Jesus Christ. Herein indeed, is love, not that we loved thee, but that thou lovedst us, and gavest thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have eternal life. O the height, and the depth, and the breadth, and the length of thy love, shown to us in not sparing thine own Son, but delivering him up to the death for us all. May our minds be enlightened by the discoveries of thy word. May our hearts be enriched by the visitations of thy grace, so that we may sincerely believe in the Saviour, and thankfully embrace his great salvation. May we renounce all refuges of lies, to lean on the only name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. May we stand as suppliants at the foot of the cross, confessing our lost condition, and asking humbly for pardon and redemption as thy free and unmerited gifts, through the mediation of thy blessed Son. O Lord, do thou open our understandings, to learn the unsearchable riches of thy grace. Do thou dispose our hearts to love and serve thee. May the Holy Spirit deliver us from the dominion of evil, and restore us to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. O Lord, we acknowledge that the ways of thy providence seem often dark to our weak and ignorant minds. Let not our souls be disquieted within us, when thy dispensations are beyond the reach of our limited knowledge. Enable us, in the most perplexing difficulties, and under the most painful trials, to preserve a firm faith in thee, as ordering all things after the counsel of thine own will, and over-ruling all events for thine own glory, and for the spiritual good of thy believing people. Teach us, O Lord, to possess our souls in patience, and give to us the blessedness of the man whose mind is stayed upon the Lord, and whose spirit is joyful in the God of his salvation. Hasten, O Lord, the time foretold by the prophets, when every form of idolatry shall be overthrown, when the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, when the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Most merciful Father, let thy blessing descend on all who are laid on beds of languishing, and let thy mercy be extended to them that are appointed to die. Watch over our friends, to keep them from the evils that are in the world, and to enrich them abundantly with spiritual blessings. O Lord prepare us for the duties of this day, let our lives be spent in thy fear, and let us be received at death into glory, for the sake of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CVI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—COLOSSIANS IV.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Among the many pleasing effects produced by the gospel, one of the most interesting to a well constituted mind, is the spirit of kindness which it diffuses throughout the various classes in society. By bringing before us the circumstances in which all men are similar to one another, as accountable creatures that have fallen from innocence, and by pointing out the Christian privileges which all equally enjoy, it teaches us that the distinctions of this life are always to be viewed in connection with the discovery of another, and that every man has a Lord and master in heaven. Let masters act toward their servants under this conviction, not only giving them what is just and equal as a recompence for their services, and speaking to them in terms of courtesy, and consulting their good in this world, but setting before them pure and pious examples, and admonishing them to be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer is the bond by which Christians maintain a union with their Father in heaven. It is our duty to watch against those temptations to neglect it, that may arise either from the cares of the world, or the natural coldness of our own hearts, for unless we are instant in prayer, we cannot profit by other means of grace, nor can we be faithful in discharging our incumbent obligations. Our prayers should be offered for them that minister in sacred things, that they may be faithful in their Master's cause, and that their labours may issue in the spiritual improvement of their people.

No department of Christian duty requires more judgment than that which relates to those who are either averse to religion altogether, or who regard it with frigid indifference. Believers are in consequence 'to walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time;' giving offence to no man, shunning all appearance of evil, and presenting their most holy faith before the thoughtless and irreligious, in its most winning and alluring form.

Christ called his followers the salt of the earth, to denote the purity of conduct they preserved, and by which they saved the world around them from sinking into universal corruption. When the apostle enjoins, 'let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt,' he commands us to imbue our language on all subjects, and on all occasions, with the temper and disposition of the gospel, which are equally necessary to render it suitable to our Christian profession, as salt is requisite to save from decay. Whatever be the topic to which our attention is turned we are to treat it as becometh the followers of Jesus Christ. Let it be our care to follow this difficult but important rule in our lives, that we may know how to answer every man, and may promote the glory of our blessed Redeemer.

On those counsels and salutations by which the epistle is closed, no observations need be offered, except in reference to Onesimus, who is called 'a

faithful and beloved brother.' This is the same person who is alluded to in Paul's epistle to Philemon, and who is there spoken of as having deserted his master Philemon's service, and as having been converted by Paul to the Christian faith. During the interval that elapsed between writing the one epistle and the other, a remarkable change had taken place in his character, and in the feelings with which Paul regarded him. And this is a very pleasing example of the manner in which the gospel elevates the character of all that embrace it, of the way in which the men who are least useful in the world become valuable members of the church and of society, as soon as they embrace its enlightened doctrines, and come under its purifying sway.

The apostle besought the Colossians to 'remember his bonds,' to commend him in their prayers to God's protection, and to ask for his deliverance if it was God's will, that he might prosecute anew his apostolical labours. Let us 'remember them that are in bonds as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity,' as being ourselves also in the way, and give our sympathy and our prayers especially to those who suffer for righteousness' sake.

PRAYER.

O Lord God of our salvation, let our prayer this evening come before thee, and incline thine ear to our cry. We have sinned against thee, O thou preserver of men, and we are no more worthy to be called thy children. We have not received the lessons of thy word into our hearts, we have not been improved as we ought to have been by the ways of thy providence. Neither thy solemn warnings, nor thy tender invitations, have made a suitable impression on our souls. O Lord, pardon our sins and save us from temptation. Take the stony hearts out of our flesh, and give us hearts of flesh, that we may walk in thy statutes, and keep thine ordinances, and do them, that we may be thy people, and that thou mayest be our God. O may the love of Christ constrain us thus to judge, that if one died for all then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again. Let the Holy Spirit dwell in our souls; let faith, and hope, and love, and joy, and humility, and resignation, take up their abode in our hearts, and let us look not at the things that are seen and temporal, but at the things that are unseen and eternal. O Lord, teach us to remember that we have all one Master in heaven, and let us, under the influence of this conviction, be regarding all our brethren with a brother's eye, and be doing good to all men as we have opportunity. Let us feel the necessity, and let us value the privilege of making our requests known unto thee, and let us be praying always for thy grace, and for the

which shrinks from every trial for the sake of the truth, which gives way before every blast of temptation, which leaves us murmuring under the afflictions of life, cannot be that hope which is an anchor of the soul, sure, and steadfast. 4. He gives thanks because these graces were manifest in the sight of God. We may impose upon our fellow-men by false appearances, by a pretended zeal for the advancement of Christ's cause; but no veil can hide from God's all-seeing eye, and that only which is approved in his sight can stand the impartial scrutiny of final judgment.

The apostle, in the 4th verse, traces the bestowal of these blessings to the sovereign and electing grace of God. 'Believers are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be to the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made them accepted in the Beloved.' The evidences of their election of God are thus given: 1. Because the gospel came to them not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. They heard it not merely as an interesting system of religion, but it affected their hearts, and produced such holy impressions as plainly showed the accompanying power of the Holy Ghost, convincing them of sin, renewing their minds, and so assuring them of the truth, that for the sake of it they willingly sacrificed every earthly comfort and worldly advantage. 2. Because it led them to be followers of the Lord Jesus, walking as he also walked, and enduring, with joy of the Holy Ghost, the severest afflictions which the rage and fury of their enemies could heap upon them. 3. Because they were not only ensamples to believers, but were effectually turned from idols to serve the living God. They abandoned the false worship in which they had been educated, and devoted themselves unreservedly to the service of the true God. 4. Because they set themselves in the attitude of waiting for the coming of the Son of God. They looked to him as the author of their faith, of their salvation from wrath, and they longed for his second coming in power and glory to effect their complete deliverance from sin and death, and the final redemption of all his ransomed, chosen people. Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

May the gospel produce in us the like blessed effects. May God, in mercy, save us from the fatal delusion of resting in a mere outward profession of Christianity. Multitudes, it is to be feared, are thus deceiving themselves, and ruining their own souls. But let us remember the declaration of scripture, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.' Lord, evermore give us that faith which is the work of thine own Spirit, and may 'the trial of our faith, being much more precious than that of gold which perisheth, be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, who art good unto all, and whose tender mercies are over all thy works, we come before thee on this evening, confessing that we

have nothing to hope for, but from the riches of thy free and unmerited goodness in Christ Jesus our Lord, and giving thee thanks for the word of truth which thou hast put into our hands, making known the rich provision for our souls in the gospel of thy Son, the free offers of salvation, and the promise of thy Spirit to make us partakers of its blessings and benefits. Give us to feel our need of a Saviour; show us more and more our danger and guilt apart from Christ; send forth thy Spirit into our hearts, and may he take of the things that are Christ's and show them unto our souls; and may the gospel become unto us the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. Forbid that any of us should be deceiving ourselves by a mere profession of attachment to Christ, that any of us should be resting satisfied with a form of godliness while destitute of the power, with a name to live while the spirit is really dead; but may we be the Lord's disciples in deed and in truth. Give us that faith which worketh by love, which purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world. Shed abroad thy love in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us. In all our intercourse with the world, may it animate our whole conduct, and pervade all our thoughts, and words, and actions, leading us to follow after holiness, and righteousness, and truth, even after those things which are well-pleasing in thy sight. Make us living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men, whilst we wait for thy Son from heaven, whom thou didst raise from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come. Pardon, most merciful God, the iniquities of the past day, our forgetfulness of thee, our indifference to the things which concern our everlasting peace. We ever stand in need of the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Jesus, wash us in it from every defilement, and cover us with the perfect righteousness of Christ. Watch over us this night, as thou hast done in the days and nights that are past, and over all who are near and dear unto us, wherever they are. Let thy way be known upon earth, thy saving health amongst all the nations. Let the people praise thee, O Lord, yea, let all the people praise thee. Pardon our unworthiness, send us thy blessing from on high, and accept us graciously, for the sake of Jehovah our righteousness. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LVII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH XVII.

REMARKS.

Impenitent sinners usually think lightly of sin. At the 10th verse of the preceding chapter, the hardened and rebellious Israelites are represented as putting this question to the prophet, 'Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this evil against us? or what is our iniquity, or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?' He is at the same time informed what answer he should give to their inquiry, and in the beginning of the chapter before us, the Lord intimates still further the enormity of their sin, declaring that it was deeply engraven on the book of his remembrance; yea, that it was written on the table of their own hearts, and witnessed by the altars on which they sacrificed to idols. Their children also bore witness against them, having been early taught to participate in their abominations, and to forsake the worship and service of the true God.

Ver. 5—8. The Jews, instead of betaking themselves to their Almighty protector, had frequently in the time of distress, and when assailed by their enemies, called in the assistance of the neighbouring nations and princes; the Lord therefore takes occasion to denounce his righteous indignation against such as trust in an arm of flesh, and most significantly contrasts their condition with that of believers, whose hope and confidence the Lord is.

Ver. 9—11. Wicked indeed and deceitful is the heart of man. No man can tell the depths of corruption which lurk within his own breast. 'He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.' What need have we to pray that God would keep us continually by his grace! that he who alone knoweth the heart would create in us clean hearts and renew right spirits within us, and ever lead us in the way everlasting. This should be our daily constant prayer; for the end for which the Lord searches and tries the heart is, 'that he may render to every man according to his works,' Gal. vi. 7, 8.

Ver. 12, 13. In Mount Zion, in the temple erected there of old, God met with his waiting people—there he displayed the glory of his grace, and gave forth the manifestations of his special presence. To us hath been given the privilege of access in every place, by that new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the vail; may we then cleave unto the hope of Israel—Zion's king, through it, and thus shall our names, instead of being written on perishable dust, be enrolled in heaven among the true Israel of God.

Ver. 14—18. The children of God are in this life exposed to the ridicule and scorn of the unbelieving, more especially the faithful ministers of God's word are often treated with contempt, and their warnings regarded with indifference. Such is the complaint of Jeremiah. But in this they only experience the same treatment as their heavenly Master. 'If they have persecuted me,' he says, 'they

will also persecute you.' Whatever may be the trials which they endure at the hands of an ungodly world, however lightly their labours in the cause of Christ may be esteemed, there is a day coming when these shall be acknowledged with approbation before an assembled universe, while their adversaries shall be punished with everlasting shame.

Ver. 19—27. The Lord is a jealous God. His name and his honour will he not give to another. He challenges a special propriety in the sabbath, and hath guarded the sacredness of that day by many awful sanctions. Of so much importance did he consider the hallowing of that day to the peace and prosperity of the nation, that he commands the prophet to proclaim his will concerning it in the ears of all the people, at the gates of the city, whither they were wont to resort. Indeed, it is a fact attested by the experience of every age, that the manner in which the Sabbath is observed, is a just index of the state of religion in the land. Let us all then as individuals, and as families, in our respective spheres, labour to sanctify God's blessed day. Let us carefully guard against the intrusion of secular employments or unhallowed thoughts; let it be specially set apart for communing with our God, and then shall our souls be blessed from on high, our families shall be the favoured residence of the God of Jacob, and that righteousness which alone exalteth a nation shall flourish and abound amongst us.

PRAYER.

Thou art the omniscient and the heart-searching God. All things are naked and open before thee. Thou settest our iniquities before thee—our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. Help us, therefore, to approach thy throne of grace with the deepest humility, and with that sense of our own unworthiness which becomes us as transgressors of thy holy law. Our consciences do testify against us—our own hearts do condemn us, and thou art greater than our hearts, and knowest all things. We can plead nothing in ourselves, O righteous God, in extenuation of our guilt; but we rejoice that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin, and by looking unto the Lamb that was slain, may every iniquity which stands against us be blotted out from the book of thy remembrance; may we attain that peace which passeth all understanding, which the world can neither give nor take away. We know from thy word, and we feel in our own experience, that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. We know from thy word, and we feel in our own experience, that he who trusteth in his own heart is a fool. O create in us clean hearts, and renew right spirits within us. Take away the hard and stony hearts out of our flesh, and give us hearts of flesh. Put thy Spirit within us, to dwell and abide in our hearts. Keep us ever

distrustful of ourselves, and strong in thy promised strength, that we may run and not be weary, that we may walk and not faint. Save us from putting our trust in any created thing, but may the eternal God be our refuge, and receiving out of the fullness that is treasured up in Christ, those supplies of grace of which we stand in need, may we become fruitful trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that thou mayest be glorified. Let the same mind be in us, which was also in Christ. May we not be ashamed of him or of his cause; but may we be enabled to stand forth as witnesses to the power, and grace, and glory of the Redeemer. Let the kingdom of Satan be destroyed, let thy name be hallowed, let thy sabbath be sanctified, let the kingdom of Christ be built up and established. Put an end to the reign of ignorance, of superstition, of vice, and idolatry, and may the time soon come when pure incense and offering shall be presented unto thee, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. Bless all whom we ought to remember before thee; be gracious to our friends, reward our benefactors, forgive our enemies. Keep us this day from the evil that is in the world. May we regard each day as a day in connection with eternity. And the Lord preserve our going out and our coming in from this time forth, even for evermore. Hear us from thy holy sanctuary, and take away all our sins, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXII. 5.

SCRIPTURE—I THESSALONIANS II.

REMARKS.

One principal end, it is to be observed, which the apostle had in view, in writing to the Thessalonian converts, was to confirm their attachment to the gospel as 'the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation.' Having, therefore, for this purpose, called their attention, in the commencement of the epistle, to the blessed and holy influence, which, through the divine Spirit, it had produced upon their own souls, he proceeds, in illustration of the same point, to remind them of the manner in which he had fulfilled his ministry amongst them—proving that he was actuated by no worldly motive, and appealing to their own consciences for the truth of what he affirmed. The chapter before us, then, may be regarded as furnishing an instructive lesson to ministers in every age. And happy are they who, with a pure conscience in the sight of God, can call their charge to bear witness to the faithfulness and

zeal with which they have sought to win souls to Christ.

We observe, 1. His unshaken constancy, notwithstanding the opposition of men, in making known the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

2. He had a single eye to the glory of God. He sought not honour from men.

3. His affection for the Thessalonian converts. We can scarcely conceive words or sentiments more expressive of sincere and fervent attachment than those set before us in the eighth and ninth verses. Love to Christ, and, as a necessary consequence, love to the souls of men, are indispensable requisites in the Christian ministry. Without these there will be neither life nor vigour in the ministerial work. 'We seek not,' says Paul, 'yours, but you.'

4. The holiness and blamelessness of his life. The labour of ministers, however fervent and zealous, will be effectually marred, if in their conduct there is a want of that purity and devotedness to Christ's cause which become his disciples. It has been well said, that wherever you behold a Jew, you behold a living evidence of the truth of Christianity; so wherever we behold exemplified in the Christian minister the influence of those doctrines which it is his work to commend, what force of persuasion does it add to his words! how much does it tend to stop the mouths of the gainsayers and profane! 'Give no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.'

If we have received the gospel not as the word of men, but as the word of God; if we are believers; if it has wrought effectually in us, one of its blessed effects will be, that we will become followers of Christ through good report and through evil report. For this the apostle gives thanks in behalf of the Thessalonian converts. Persecuted by their own countrymen, even as the churches of Judea were by the Jews, they yet continued steadfast in the faith, rejoicing inasmuch as they were counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ. Having mentioned the Jews, he is reminded of their ingratitude in crucifying the Lord of glory; and adds this awful truth, that the enmity which they now showed to the truth, in their endeavours to prevent the word of life being offered to the Gentiles, was as it were the filling up of that cup of iniquity for which the wrath of God was to come upon them to the uttermost. How strikingly has this been verified! 'Jerusalem is now trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.' And how solemn is the warning here recorded to us as individuals, as a church, and as a nation!

In the concluding verses of this chapter ministers still farther learn, from the example of Paul, that whatever opposition they may encounter from the devices of satan, they ought not to be cast down or discouraged. He in whose cause they are engaged is mightier far, and can in a moment defeat his malicious designs. Let them still affectionately seek, by prayer and by every way of God's appointment, the conversion and edification of those committed to their care; for what is their hope, and joy, and crown of rejoicing, in the day of the Lord Jesus? will it not be the souls saved, through their instrumentality, as additional trophies of redeeming grace? How

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THURSDAY EVENING.

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SCRIPTURE—1 THESSALONIANS II.

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transporting the thought, both to the faithful servant of God and his believing people! and how much fitted to inspire and invigorate his labours, that concerning any of his flock he should at last be permitted to say, 'Behold me and the children whom thou hast given me!'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou hast brought us in safety to the close of another day, and we would desire to give praise and thanks unto thy name. We come not into thy presence trusting in any thing which we possess. We have no holiness of our own to recommend us unto thee; we have no righteousness of our own to justify us in thy sight; we have no wisdom of our own to guide us; we have no strength of our own to enable us to serve; but we rejoice that all these are treasured up in Christ Jesus, and that we are invited to ask and we shall receive; to seek, and we shall find; to knock, and it shall be opened unto us. We are not straitened in thee the Lord. May we not be straitened in ourselves. Thou hast invited us to ask for great things, and we would now desire to do so. We pray for the pardon of all our sins; we pray for thy Spirit, as the greatest of those gifts which Christ procured for his believing people. May he lead and guide us into all truth, and make us the followers of Christ through good report and through evil report. If thou in mercy hast given to any of us to taste and see that the Lord is gracious; if thou hast enabled us in any measure to glory in the cross of Christ, and to give evidence of the divine life begun in our souls, carry on thy good work, perfect that which concerneth us. Enable us to labour, as far as our influence extends, for the advancement of thy kingdom; and may the whole earth be filled with the glory of the Lord. Bless thy ministering servants every where. Make them workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Be especially gracious to him whose ministrations we enjoy. May his own soul be abundantly enriched with the treasures of thy grace; speaking the truth in love, may we receive the word at his mouth, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe. Lord, grant that he may have many amongst us as his joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of Jesus Christ at his coming. Prosper and extend thy church. Convince the careless, convert the unconverted, and stablish and strengthen thine own people. Sanctify afflictions to the afflicted. Raise up the bowed down. Comfort those who mourn in Zion. Draw near unto those who are drawing near unto death. Pardon for Christ's

sake wherein we have offended against thee during the past day, for in all things we offend and come short of thy glory. We commend ourselves, and all whom we ought to remember before thee, to thy care and keeping this night. Thou Shepherd of Israel, who neither slumberest nor sleepest, preserve us from all evil. Whether we live, may we live unto the Lord; whether we die, may we die unto the Lord. Whether living or dying, may we be wholly thine. All that we ask is in the name and for the sake of Christ Jesus, to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, be glory for ever. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXIII.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH XXIII.

REMARKS.

The woes and the promises of this chapter were alike fulfilled in the subsequent history of Israel. The false prophets and priests were slain or taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar; the scattered remnant of the flock were afterwards brought again to their fold, from all the countries whither they had been driven; faithful shepherds were set over them, such as Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah; and at length Israel beheld in Jesus of Nazareth, the promised Branch of David, the Lord their righteousness, who wrought out for them a redemption far more glorious than their deliverances from Egyptian and Chaldean bondage. But let us apply the chapter to ourselves.

1. Let it remind us of our privileges as members of the visible church. We are now the sheep of God's pasture, as the Israelites once were, and he has set over us a great and a good Shepherd, to lead us beside the still waters, and to cause us to lie down in the green pastures, with shepherds under him to feed our souls with the words of knowledge, and to draw water for us out of the wells of salvation. And what a union of excellencies do we find in the chief Shepherd! He is the Lord our righteousness; he laid down his life for the sheep, and in him we have pardon, acceptance, and eternal life. In him, too, we have strength and a sure defence; for he is a king, he reigns and prospers, and he restrains and conquers all our enemies. How 'safely' then do we 'dwell' under a guardianship like his, and how well may we say, in the exercise of like precious faith with David, 'The Lord is our shepherd, we shall not want. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives, and in the house of the Lord we will dwell for ever.'

2. Let the chapter remind us of the strong claim which the pastors of the church have upon our sympathies and prayers. How solemn are their responsibilities! They must be careful to abide in the counsel of the Lord, ver. 22. They must declare to the flock the whole truth, keeping back nothing that is profitable; not saying, 'ye shall have peace,

while there is no peace,' ver. 28. It is at their eternal peril that they neglect the flock, and the blood of souls will be required at their hand, ver. 15—19. On the other hand, what a blessing is their ministry fitted to be to our souls, when they receive grace to be faithful in dispensing the word of God, for that word is not like the arm of man. It is as wheat compared with chaff, ver. 28; having weight and worth, taking root in the soul, and bringing forth a rich harvest. It is like a fire, ver. 29; melting and purifying the natural heart, and enkindling the flame of zeal and love. It is like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces, so that the stoutest and most stubborn feel its subduing power. Whether, then, we look to their awful responsibilities, or to the blessed effects which their ministry, if faithful, is fitted to produce upon ourselves and others, they have a powerful claim upon our sympathies and prayers. We should never forget them in our family devotions. The domestic altar should help the pulpit, and our own pastor especially we should bear continually on our hearts at the throne of grace. We shall thus strengthen his hands, and encourage his heart; and the word of the Lord, in answer to our prayers, shall have free course and be glorified. What a blessing to the families of a flock to have a faithful pastor! And what a blessing to a pastor, seeking to be faithful, to have a sympathising and praying flock.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, we bow before thee in humble adoration of thy greatness and holiness, and the glorious honour of thy majesty. We unite in blessing thee as the author of all our mercies, the giver of every good and perfect gift, and we renew our supplications in the name of Jesus, the Lord our righteousness, that thou wouldst be merciful to us and bless us, and cause thy face to shine upon us, and give us peace. Holy Father! we own our utter unworthiness of the least of thy favours; we are a people laden with iniquity, an unthankful, a rebellious people. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one of us to his own way. But adored be thy mercy, thou hast not cast us off; thou hast done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Thou hast sent the good Shepherd to seek and to save us, and hast laid upon him the iniquity of us all; and him who knew no sin thou hast made sin for us, that he might bring us to thee. O may we all be brought back to thee. May he come after us into the wilderness until he find us; and when he hath found us, may he lay us on his shoulders rejoicing, and carry us back to the fold. May we live through his death, may we be accepted through his righteousness, may we be blessed with his love, may we be defended by his power, and restrained from wandering by his grace; and may we at last be brought to his heavenly fold. And do

thou grant unto us, O God of all grace, the character of Christ's sheep, as well as their privileges. May we hear his voice, may we follow his footsteps, may we flee from the stranger. Cleanse us, O Lord, from all our pollutions. Free us of the stain of sin, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and make us meet to join that holy and beautiful flock above, which the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, feedeth and leadeth unto living fountains of waters, and from whose eyes thou wipest all tears away. We bless thee, O Lord, for the pastors whom thou hast appointed to feed the church which Christ has purchased with his own blood, and we earnestly beseech thee to give them all grace to be faithful and successful in their solemn work. May they stand in thy counsel, and cause the people to hear thy words, that thus they may turn them from their evil ways. We pray more especially for the pastor whom thou hast set over ourselves. May he be a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost. Let the word of Christ dwell in him richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, and may he be enabled rightly and wisely to divide it both to the sheep and lambs of thy flock. And be thou thyself, O Saviour, the Shepherd of his flock. Seek that which is lost, bring again that which is driven away, bind up that which is broken, and strengthen that which is sick. Feed them in a good pasture, and let them lie in a good fold. And cause the shower to come down in his season; yea, let these be showers of blessing. We acknowledge thy goodness, O Lord, in sparing us to see this new day; we commend ourselves to thy grace ere we enter upon its business, and feel the power of its temptations. O keep our feet from falling, our eyes from tears, and our souls from death; and enable us to glorify thee in our bodies and spirits, which are thine. We invoke thy blessing upon our kindred and friends, and we entreat thee to be their Father as well as our Father, their God as well as our God. And now may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—1 THESSALONIANS III.

REMARKS.

This chapter forms a very suitable sequel to the portion we read in the morning.

1. It presents a beautiful example of that love to souls which should animate the pastors of Christ's flock, and his people at large. While the apostle was present with the Thessalonians, he had been gentle as a nurse towards them; he had exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of them as a father doth his children; and when he left them, he had rather 'been taken from them,' than gone willingly, and it was only in presence, not in heart. And now that he was absent from them for a season, mark the depth and the tenderness of his solicitude on their account. He could not bear to be without tidings of their spiritual welfare. He was willing to be left alone at Athens, in order that Timothy might visit them to know their faith, and to establish and comfort them. And when Timothy returned, the good tidings he brought regarding them, were comfort enough to him amidst all his afflictions, and filled him with a gratitude to God, too great to be expressed. It was his unceasing prayer that he might see them again, and his very life was bound up in their steadfastness; 'now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.'

What a pattern is this for the ministers of Christ and his people in general! What a reproof to our coldness and selfishness in regard to the spiritual interests of mankind! And what a cause for thankfulness is it to the chief Shepherd, that he has made the standard of pastoral love and faithfulness so high as this, for which he thus teaches his ministers to be ever aiming at higher degrees of affectionate concern for their people; he provides that their flocks shall be ever enjoying more abundant tokens and fruits of their pastoral care.

2. We may learn, from the objects of the apostle's solicitude, what we ought to be chiefly concerned about ourselves, as professing believers.

You observe his great anxiety was about the faith of the Thessalonians, that it should be steadfast and immovable, ver. 2, 3; mature and perfect, ver. 10; and rich in the fruit of holy love, 12, 13. And such are the qualities that should characterise our own faith, and must do so, if it be the faith of God's elect; a plant which our Father in heaven has planted. Its root must be firm and deep, so as not to be uprooted by the storm and tempest to which it is exposed; its stem must be ever aspiring to the fullness of its stature, and its branches must be loaded with the golden fruit of love, the love of brotherly kindness towards all the household of faith, and of self-denying benevolence towards all mankind; the love of deeds, not of words; a love that turns all its good wishes into prayer, and follows up its prayer with large and liberal performance; to have our faith established, and what is lacking in it perfected, so that its fruitfulness in love may continually increase and abound to an object which concerns us

more deeply, and should engross us far more than all worldly affairs, for it is only thus that our hearts can be established or assured before God, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

PRAYER.

Almighty Father! we would anew draw near to thy footstool with one accord. O enable us to commune with thee in spirit and in truth; and may all the day's anxieties and vanities be banished from our thoughts, that we may wait upon thee without distraction. We approach thy throne, O Lord, in the new and living way which thou hast opened up for us in the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and through him we present unto thee our worship, so polluted and unworthy. Incline thine ear unto us, O God, for his sake, and remember us with the love thou bearest to thy people. We adore thy greatness, which is unsearchable, and acknowledge our own insignificance in thy sight. Holy, holy, holy art thou, Lord God Almighty; just and true art thou, O thou King of saints; but we are all as an unclean thing, and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away. We would lie low before thee, we would cast away all high thoughts and proud imaginations, we would cry out, God be merciful to us sinners! If thou wert strict to mark iniquity, who, O Lord, could stand? But do thou justify us freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Magnify the riches of thy grace in us. Make us the monuments of thy sovereign mercy. Thanks, everlasting thanks be unto thee, for thine unspeakable gift Christ Jesus, and for the new covenant which thou hast sealed with his blood, and made known to us by his gospel. Lord! we flee to this refuge, we plead the promise of this covenant, and the preciousness of that blood, and we beseech thee, according to thy sure word, be merciful to our unrighteousness; our sins and our iniquities remember no more. Put thy laws into our minds, and write them in our hearts. Be unto us a God, and make us unto thee a people. If thou hast begun a good work in us, O do thou carry it on and perfect it, for it is thou only who canst work in us both to will and to do. Stir us up by the Spirit of life to imitate the example of the first believers. Cause us to abound like them in the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope. Let the Holy Ghost work in us mightily. May he increase our faith, establish, strengthen, settle it in our hearts, give it the mastery in our souls, and the victory over all our temptations. And may he cause us to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men, to the end he may establish our hearts unblameable in holiness before

thee, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. We pray, O Lord, for the good estate of the church of the Redeemer on earth. O heal its painful divisions, increase its zeal for thy glory, and extend its limits more and more on every side. Animate its ministers with the spirit of the apostles, and adorn its members with primitive faith and charity. Giver of all good, we bless thee for the mercies of the past day. It is thou who fillest our mouths with good things, and inspirest our hearts with gladness. Continue to bless us as a family. May we all be numbered with the household of faith. Watch at our pillows this night, O thou keeper of Israel, who neither slumberest nor sleepest, and open our eyelids to behold the light of another day. May all our days and nights be spent in thy favour; and at last may we all come to thine eternal joy, through Jesus our only Mediator. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXX.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH XXV.

REMARKS.

The character of Israel is a mirror in which we may see our own; and the history of God's dealings with them illustrates the principles of his procedure with ourselves. Let us then learn from this chapter,

1. That God takes a strict account of all the means of grace which we enjoy, and of the use we make of them. Observe he computes exactly the number of years that Jeremiah had laboured among the people, he recalls the zeal and diligence which the prophet had shown in his ministry; and he reminds them that it was not Jeremiah alone who had preached to them, but all the other prophets who lived at that time. And be sure he takes a similar account of our privileges; he reckons up every year that we enjoy the ministry of the gospel; he records the name of every ambassador of Christ who addresses us; he computes all the care and pains which our pastors have bestowed upon us; and the principle of his final reckoning with us will be this, that 'from those to whom much has been given, much shall be required.'

2. Let us mark what is the great practical end of the institution of the ministry, the burden of Jeremiah's message to Israel. His unceasing cry was, 'Turn ye again!' And what was the burden of Paul's preaching in like manner? It was, 'that men should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance,' and the commission of Christ to all his ministers is, that they should 'preach repentance and remission of sins in his name among all nations.' This then is the great end which must be accomplished in us by the ministry of the gospel.

The love which the gospel reveals to us, must be a cord to draw us back to God, in newness of confidence, love, and obedience. We must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. And if this is not done, the object of the ministry is altogether frustrated, in so far as we are concerned.

3. Let us be warned of the consequences of impenitence and unbelief; 'Because ye have not heard my words,' said the Lord to the house of Judah, 'I will utterly destroy the inhabitants of this land.' And so with ourselves, the question of repentance is one of life and death, 'Except ye repent,' said the Saviour, 'ye shall all perish.' 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' God's remonstrance with us is, 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?' Let us give heed to his remonstrance, let us be in earnest about repentance unto life, let us look to him who is exalted to give not only remission of sins, but that repentance and faith which lead to it. Let it be our prayer, 'turn us, O Lord, and we shall be turned.'

4. What an impressive testimony does this chapter bear to the truth that Jehovah is governor among the nations of the earth, a righteous governor. We are too apt to imagine that his moral government was of old confined to the Jewish nation. How different was the fact! He punished the kings of Babylon, as well as the kings of Judah; nor was it only with the Chaldeans that he had a controversy, but 'with all the kingdoms of the world,' for they had all alike dishonoured him by their idolatry and wickedness. And 'his kingdom,' let us remember, 'is an everlasting kingdom, his dominion endureth throughout all generations.' What he was then, he is still—the King of kings, and the ruler of all nations. He presides over the destinies of our own country. If we nationally dishonour his law and gospel, he will punish us nationally, bringing down our greatness, recalling his precious gifts, and putting into our hands 'the wine cup of his fury.' The fear of the Lord, then, is the beginning of political as well as personal wisdom; the pure and undefiled religion of Christ is the palladium of our land; and it is the best expression of patriotism, as well as an undoubted obligation of piety, to pray and to labour for the spread of truth and godliness among all its people.

PRAYER.

We come before thee, O our God, in the multitude of thy tender mercies, and would call upon all that is within us fervently to bless thee for all thy loving-kindnesses. How precious are thy thoughts towards us, O God; how great is the sum of them! If we should reckon them up, they are more than can be numbered. We bless thee above all for thy dealings towards our souls; for the inestimable gift of the Lord Jesus Christ; and for all the spiritual privileges which thou hast vouchsafed to us through him. Thou hast been drawing us unto thee by the bonds of love, thou hast borne long with us, thou hast multiplied thy

calls and invitations, and to us, as to Israel of old, thou hast given line upon line, and precept upon precept. But like Israel too, O Lord, thou knowest we have been stiff necked and rebellious, and we have refused to turn to thee with full purpose of heart. But O do thou turn us, and we shall be turned. Thou art the Lord our God. Let the exalted Redeemer give unto us repentance and remission of sins. Let the Spirit of Christ reveal to us the love and the holiness of the cross, that we may be filled with grief and hatred of sin; and, apprehending thy mercy in Christ Jesus, may turn unto thee, to walk before thee in righteousness all the rest of our days. O heal our backslidings, love us freely, and receive us graciously; through the stripes of Jesus may we be healed. Let his dying love overcome our enmity, let his Spirit give us light and life, holiness and comfort; and now at length after all our slowness and backwardness of heart, may we be happily joined unto the Lord in the bonds of an everlasting covenant; and hereafter grow in grace and meetness for the inheritance of the saints. Lord! thou hast been reminding us from thy word that thou art the governor among the nations, and that it is only truth and righteousness that preserves and exalts a people. We adore thee as the supreme Disposer of the destinies of our own land. Avert from it, we beseech thee, thy merited judgments, and cast not its crown and glory down to the ground. Pour out upon us the spirit of national repentance, and of public zeal for thy truth and honour. Let thy name be hallowed, let thy will be done among us as it is in heaven. Restrain our backslidings, arrest the progress of infidelity and superstition; reform, and purify, and extend the churches which thou hast planted among us more and more; and bless the labours of all thy ministers and people to diffuse the gospel of Christ, and revive the power of godliness throughout the land. We thank thee, O Lord, for the repose of the past night, and for the gladsome light of a new day. Enable us to walk in thy fear all this day long, and may we be strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus, to resist temptation, to fight the good fight of faith, and to perform whatsoever things are just, and true, and pure, and honest, and lovely, and of good report. Let thy blessing rest upon us as a family, and upon all who are dear to us, wherever they are. Knit our hearts together in the bonds of faith and love, and unite us all at last in the enjoyment of thy heavenly kingdom. We ask all in the name of Christ Jesus our Advocate, whom thou hearest always. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XVI. 8.

SCRIPTURE—1 THESSALONIANS IV.

REMARKS.

To his prayers in behalf of the Thessalonians in the preceding chapter, the apostle here adds urgent exhortations; thus teaching ministers to give themselves unitedly to 'prayer and the ministry of the word,' and reminding all, that while they wait upon the God of all grace for the spirit of faith and love, they must also give attendance to the word, as the instrument which the Spirit employs. We are reminded in this chapter of the peculiar characteristics of the Christian walk.

1. It is a walk of increasing holiness, ver. 1—8. While others care only about pleasing man, or their own sinful lusts, it should be the Christian's great object to please God, and to do so more and more. And the reasons for this are many and weighty. It is the commandment of Christ Jesus, whose gospel is not the minister of sin, but 'a doctrine according to godliness.' It is the will of God with regard to us, and his will is law to the creature, a law of liberty to the believer. It is the object of the gospel calling, which while it is a free, a high, a heavenly calling, is also pre-eminently a holy one. It is the end of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, ver. 8; for 'the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is given us, to make us free from the law of sin and death.'

2. It is a walk of expanding and growing love, ver. 9, 10. The Thessalonians did not confine their love within the narrow circle of their own society, but extended it to 'all the brethren in all Macedonia, i.e. they manifested it towards all within the sphere of their intercourse in whom they recognised the features of Christ. What a contrast, what a rebuke to that narrow and sectarian spirit which delights rather to contract, than to extend the range of its sympathies, and which leads so many to look coldly and jealously upon all who do not belong to the same section of the universal church as themselves. The Thessalonians did not need to be exhorted to cultivate the spirit of love, but how much do Christians need to be exhorted now!

3. It is a walk of quiet and honest industry in our worldly callings. It should be made obvious to those that are without, that the citizens of heaven are also the best and most useful citizens of earth: 'no brawlers,' but quiet and peaceable; no busy bodies in other men's matters, but minding 'their own business;' no idlers, but diligent in business, as well as fervent in spirit; not dishonest, but giving to all their due; not sunk in disreputable and squalid poverty, but having lack of nothing, as the fruit of God's blessing upon their decent industry.

4. It is a walk of comfort and good hope, ver. 13—18. If it has its duties, it has also its privileges. If we are called to walk in the fear of God, we have also the comforts of the Holy Ghost. If Christ be truly formed within us, our view is not confined to the narrow limits of time, our best hopes will be realized, our highest happiness enjoyed when time

shall be no more. Mark the blessed elements of our Christian hope: The second glorious appearing of the Lord from heaven, ver. 16, whom it is now our happiness to believe in, though we see him not, but whom it must be ecstasy to gaze upon 'as he is,' arrayed in all the glory of his Father, and covered with all the lustre of his own excellencies. The resurrection of our bodies from the sleep of death, ver. 14; for he who is the resurrection and the life, has promised to change our vile bodies, and fashion them in the likeness of his own glorious body. And how blessed not only to behold his glory, but to reflect it; to be made like him, as well as to see him as he is. Reunion with those whom we loved on earth, and from whom it cost us so bitter a pang to be torn asunder; we 'shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord; the joy of that meeting with him being, if possible, enhanced by the charm of their renewed fellowship. Last of all, and to crown the whole prospect,'—'So shall we ever be with the Lord.' The bonds of that heavenly fellowship are never to be broken, the joy is to be as abiding as exuberant, it is to flow on in a stream unbroken and unmixed, throughout eternity.

PRAYER.

Father of mercies, and God of all grace! we bless thee for the free access we have to thy throne through the mediation of Jesus, and for the precious promises which thou hast given us to encourage us always to pray and not to faint. Blessed be thy name that thy love is freely proffered to us anew in Christ Jesus. The wages of sin is death, but thy free gift to us is eternal life through him. Thou hast laid the burden of our guilt upon him. Thou hast redeemed us from the curse of the law by making him a curse for us; and in him art thou reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. O do thou reconcile us. May we be at peace with thee through the blood of the cross. Forbid that any of us should continue strangers and foreigners; may we all be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. Give us, O Lord, the faith of thy people, that we may experience the joy and peace of believing, and that thy abundant grace may redound by our thanksgivings to thine own glory. We bless thee for the instructions and admonitions of thy holy word. Seal upon our minds the portion which has now been read. Let our walk as a family be according to thy will, and the commandments of the Lord Jesus. May we follow after holiness, without which no man shall see thee. The Lord make us to increase and abound in love, and in the hour of domestic trial and sorrow, may we enjoy the consolations of thy grace, and be sustained by the blessed hope set before us. May we all be numbered with those who love the Lord's second appearing.

May this glorious hope regulate and sanctify our whole spirit and conversation; and as thou hast united us together on earth by the nearest and dearest ties, so may we be eternally united in the presence of the glorified Redeemer. Yea, Lord, do thou count us worthy of this high calling, and meanwhile fulfil all the good pleasure of thy goodness in us, and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, and we in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, we would review with grateful hearts all thy goodness and mercy to us during the past week. Truly we are not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truths which thou hast made to pass before us. Blot out all the week's transgressions, and crown with thy blessing all its labours. We rejoice in the prospect of another sabbath. Fulfil our hope, say unto us again, Go ye up to the house of the Lord, and bless abundantly to our souls the provision of Zion. We commend to thy grace all the ambassadors of Christ. May they come forth on the morrow in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel. May their preaching be with power, and let thy word have her course, and be glorified in the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints. Lord, all our desire is before thee. Deal bountifully with thy servants, for the sake of him in whom thou art ever well-pleased, and in whose words we sum up all our petitions, Our Father, &c.

FORTY-FIRST WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXVI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CXVI. CXVII.

REMARKS.

PSALM CXVI. It is not quite certain by whom or at what time this psalm was composed, whether by king David, or by some servant of the Most High at a later period. Whoever was the penman of it, we have here the exercise and experience of a child of God, written upon a tablet of ever-during remembrance, for the instruction and benefit of the church to the end of time. Let us, on the morning of another sabbath, seriously and devoutly consider what is thus recorded.

Ver. 1—8. The psalm opens with a declaration of the psalmist's 'love' to the hearer and answerer of prayer. His heart is full of the remembrance of his goodness, and it overflows in irrepressible expressions of affection, while he recalls the mercies and deliverances of which he had been the subject. The psalm-

ist had had sad and bitter experience of distress. What language can present to us a stronger idea of suffering and inward trouble? 'The sorrows of death compassed me—the pains of hell gat hold upon me—I found trouble and sorrow.' He was 'brought low,' so that affliction was the cup given him to drink. Tears were his meat day and night; his feet were prone to 'folly;' and his soul was oppressed with the very chill and awfulness of 'death.' What was the course that he pursued when brought into such trying circumstances? He tells us himself (ver. 4.), 'Then called I upon the name of the Lord;' yea, and he tells us, moreover, the substance of his prayer. The words are few, but they are full of meaning. There is in them the believing recognition of Jehovah in his grace and power; there is the earnest and 'beseeching' cry of a suppliant groaning beneath the pressure of his burdens, conscious of the greatness of his want, and, at the same time, immovably convinced that help is to be found in him whose ears are ever open to the cry of his people—'*O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.*' It is the solemn testimony of this man of God, that not in vain did this prayer of faith enter into the ears of the Lord God of sabaoth; not in vain did his 'cry' ascend, out of the utmost 'depths' of his trouble, and pain, and sorrow, to his heavenly Father. 'Gracious is the Lord, and righteous,' he says (ver. 5.), speaking of him according to his own experience of his goodness, 'Yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple. I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.' 'Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.' It was his experience of what God had done for him, as a God 'merciful and gracious,' the 'hearer and the answerer of prayer,' that pressed out these words of warm attachment from his lips, 'I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplication.' And it was his estimate of all this thus formed, that led him to call upon his soul to 'return unto the Lord,' with the fixed and unalterable determination 'to call upon him as long as he lived.'

Ver. 9—19. It was because he thus knew the benefit of prayer, that the psalmist was led to form the determination 'to call upon the Lord as long as he lived.' It was because he had had experience of the 'good will of him that dwelt in the bush,' that he was led to form further resolutions of closer walking with God. This world is, in every respect, an uncongenial sphere to the man who would do this. It is full of idols and ungodliness; it is full of the means of seduction; all its pursuits and enjoyments having the tendency to lead us away from God. The psalmist, however, records his determination to 'walk before the Lord in the land of the living.' The secret of 'walking before the Lord in the land of the living,' is to be continually waiting upon him, and 'calling upon his name,' ver. 13, 14, 18, 19. It is thus that strength will be obtained for every exigency, supply for every want, and the power of a new perseverance adequate to the necessities of each new day. On a serious review of all these things, surely no language can be more becoming in our life,

or can better express the emotions of the believing heart, than that which is contained in the succeeding psalm, cxvii.

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever blessed God, we would approach thee, on this the morning of thine own day, in a filial spirit, laying hold of thee as Father. Help us to pray, and hear us when we cry unto thee. O Lord, we acknowledge our dependence on thee for the bestowal and the continuance of every blessing. Enable us to walk before thee in the land of the living. We are dwelling in a world sunk in ungodliness. We are surrounded by many enemies. We are exposed to innumerable snares. We feel that our footing is to be maintained as the follower of the Lamb, it can only be in the strength of divine grace; and that we can only advance onwards towards higher measures of spiritual attainment by the powerful leading of thy Spirit. We have had experience of our weakness; and we do earnestly beseech thee, O thou God of all grace, to pour out thy Spirit upon us from on high; to revive thy work in our souls; to quicken, strengthen, and to comfort us; to fit us for every duty; to support us under every trial; to deliver us from every enemy; and, finally, to make us more than conquerors through him that loved us. Keep us in thy fear, for the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to deliver from the snares of death. We would take encouragement, O Lord, from what thou hast told us concerning thyself in thy word, and concerning thy dealings with thy chosen. Hast thou not established for ever thy covenant of life and peace? Hast thou not written in thy book many glorious promises, whereon thou hast caused us to rest? Art thou not that God who didst lead thy people, like a flock, by the hands of Moses and Aaron? Who didst bear them as on eagles' wings; who didst bear them and carry them all the days of old? Art thou not he in whom David trusted, and who didst send an answer to his prayers? Yea, thou art the same God now that thou wert of old, faithful to all thy promises, true to all thy threatenings, keeping thy people as the apple of thine eye, that thou mightest make unto thyself a glorious name. We will trust in thee in whom our fathers trusted. We will pray to thee, thou prayer-hearing God. Answer us in peace. Be with all the ministers of the everlasting gospel this day. May they preach thy word boldly and without fear. May they feed thy lambs. May they feed thy sheep. Give efficacy to the word of thy grace. Dwell in all the assemblies of thy saints. Comfort and bless thy people.

Be with us when we go into thy house and pay our vows. May we offer unto thee the sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise. May we worship thee in spirit and in truth. Wash away all our sins in a Redeemer's blood. Cleanse us, and we shall be whiter than the snow. And may these, the words of our mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, find acceptance with thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRaise—PSALM CXVIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CXVIII.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—4. This psalm commences and ends with an exhortation to thanksgiving, upon the ground of the goodness and mercy of the Lord. The whole of the people of Israel, and especially the 'house of Aaron,' with them that 'fear the Lord,' are called upon to rejoice in his mercy, and to proclaim its perpetual endurance. What reason have we to do the same! The goodness of the Lord has been 'new unto us every morning and every evening,' and if we have a single hope for eternity, we owe it entirely to that 'mercy' which we are called upon to celebrate. The 'mercy of the Lord' was manifested of old. It was displayed in that ancient covenant of grace, which was formed 'before the mountains were brought forth, ere ever he had formed the earth and the world.' It was early displayed in its exercise. It is manifested now in the universal offer of the gospel, and in the saving of many souls. The glorious effects of it will continue for ever, so that we may take up this language and say, 'that his mercy endureth for ever.' 'The Lord is not a man that he should lie, neither the Son of man that he should repent.' How cheering, how animating, how satisfactory the thought, that that 'mercy,' to which the believer is indebted for every privilege, and enjoyment, and sublimer hope, is not something that may be withdrawn or changed, but that, like 'the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor the least shadow of turning,' it 'endureth for ever.'

Ver. 5—18. The psalmist refers to instances serving to illustrate this mercy, and to show the grounds of thanksgiving. He speaks of the answer that had been granted to his prayer in his time of need, of the deliverance he had obtained, and of the liberty and enlargement into which he had been graciously conducted. He speaks of the Lord fighting on his side, when enemies rose up against him. When the nations 'compassed him about,' great in number, fierce and cruel in their enmity, and bent on his destruction, then the Lord stood by him and helped him with a mighty arm. In consequence of which he takes up this song into his mouth, 'The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.' He speaks also of the 'mercy of the Lord,' as shown in his afflictions. He might have

justly afflicted him, even unto death. He might have justly let loose against him all his plagues, and given him over to suffering for ever; but he says, 'He hath not given me over unto death.'

If the psalmist be here regarded as a type of Christ, all this language is emphatically and most affectingly applicable to him. 'In the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared,' ver. 5. 'When the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed' (ver. 11.), the Father was on his side, that he might 'glorify his name.' And when satan, that great adversary, whose works he was 'manifested to destroy,' 'thrust sore at him that he might fall,' so it was that that very thrust was made instrumental for furthering the triumph of mercy. Recoiling, it inflicted a deadly wound upon himself. 'The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.'

Or, if the psalmist be regarded in these verses as the representative of the believer, realizing in his own experience, and describing, from his own case, what is common to all them that 'fear the Lord,' we are thus taught that we should mark well, and frequently reflect upon, the dealings and dispensations of God towards us; that we should note, and bear ever in remembrance, the answers that he gives to prayer. Truly he 'sets his people in a large place.' He stands by them when amid their enemies, whom he will ultimately destroy and trample upon. There is expressed here the care that he exercises over his people; the power that he will put forth in their behalf; their perfect security within his Almighty protection; and the awful vengeance which he will execute upon their enemies.

Ver. 19—29. 'David, preserved from death, triumphant over his enemies, and now, going up to the temple to offer his thanksgivings, attended by the thousands of Israel, seems here to call upon the porters and other Levites to open the gates of the sanctuary for his admission.' 'Those who were within seem to have sung responsively, "This is the gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter;" and then the whole company, perhaps in parts, sung the following verses.'—*Scott*. All that we have here presented to us is prophetic of Christ. He was the 'stone which the builders refused,' but who is become the 'head stone of the corner.'

PRAYER.

O Lord God, we would approach thee in the Son of thy love. Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, excellent in working. Thou art Jehovah, God over all, blessed for ever. We would approach thee on the evening of thine own day, believing that thou art, and that thou art the rewarder of them that diligently seek thee; believing that thy mercy endureth for ever, and that thou art girt about with truth and faithfulness. We thank thee for the mercies of this day, for the ordinances of thy

house, for all that we have heard and tasted of the good word of life; and we pray that an abundant blessing from on high may have accompanied the dispensation of word and ordinance. Blessed be the Lord, who hath caused the day-spring from on high to visit us; who hath reconciled us to himself through the blood of the cross, and who giveth us the hope of eternal life. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. O that we may be enabled to estimate its value; and that, under a deep sense of the guilt of sin, we may be led to flee for refuge to the hope set before us in the gospel. May it not be in vain that from sabbath to sabbath we hear the word of this salvation preached. May it not be in vain that our lot has been cast in a land of ordinances. Forbid that our hearts should be hardening amid the means of life. Forbid that it should be our condemnation that light hath entered into the world; and we have loved the darkness rather than the light, because our deeds are evil. May the seed this day sown take deep root in our hearts; and may the fruit be unto holiness, and the end life everlasting. We lament that our progress in the divine life is so little in proportion to our privileges; and our prayer is, that we may be made more in earnest about our souls, more conformed to thine image, more devoted to thy service, so that the close of every succeeding sabbath may find us advancing in every spiritual attainment, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. Blot out our sins. Teach us how aggravated they are. Forgive the iniquity of our holy things. We have to confess, that after having done all we are unprofitable servants. Take us under thy care throughout this night. May we lie down in thy fear. May no evil thing come near us. And grant that when we again mingle in the world, it may be in the spirit of those who have been with thee on the mount. Bless the sick and destitute, the poor and afflicted, and especially the dying. Hear, and answer, and accept in Jesus, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCIV. 10.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH XXIX.

REMARKS.

Jeremiah exhibits much of the conduct of the faithful minister of God. He was jealous for the honour of him who sent him; zealous in prosecuting the work entrusted to him; deeply affected in consequence of the iniquities of the people; anxious to do

them good; and approved as faithful. There are many interesting things to be noticed in the letter as recorded here, which he sent 'from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the captive people.'

He was interested in their condition. They were his 'kinsmen according to the flesh,' led away, according to the providence of God, into captivity in a strange land; but they were much upon his heart, and it was this that gave occasion to the letter, of which this chapter is principally composed. It reminds us somewhat of the spirit of Paul, in later times, as it is breathed in his epistles. He too was deeply interested in the condition of the people of God; and it was that spirit that urged him to all that frequency of admonition, and to all that earnestness of warning, which he says he prosecuted 'day and night with tears.' This ought to be the spirit of all who are actuated and dwelt in by the same spirit. No man is allowed to say, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' No man is allowed to live to himself. 'Look not every man upon his own things, but every man also upon the things of others.'

The interest that the prophet felt in his countrymen led him to address them, even though they were far away. No doubt he was found in the way of 'exhorting daily' all who were immediately around him, and were brought into personal contact with him; but he thought also of those who were far away in a distant land, peculiarly exposed to temptations on every side, and, by the Spirit of God, he addressed them in a letter. Let us do the same. Our influence should be made to extend, not only to those who are around us, but to those connected with us by the ties of family, of country, and of kind; who are settled in other lands, far away from the sound of our voice, but not beyond the reach of our communication. Removal by distance is apt to weaken the sense of responsibility; but this should not be. And the influence, even of one individual, by letters and by writings, may tell not only to the utmost extremities of the earth, but hundreds of years after he is dead, and may thus be absolutely incalculable.

There is much wisdom in the substance of the epistle, much that was well calculated for direction and encouragement. They were in danger from false prophets. These individuals were leading them astray, and unsettling their minds with the idea of a speedy deliverance, contrary to the word and counsel of God. Nothing could be more calculated than this to aggravate the evils of their captivity. It would naturally render them careless and disregarding of those from whose land they were to be, in their estimation, so speedily delivered, and thus would excite, at the hands of their oppressors, a loftier insolence and tyranny. Thus the false prophets, besides speaking contrary to truth, acted a most unmerciful part towards those whom they attempted to delude. Jeremiah told them expressly, that only 'after seventy years' would the Lord visit them. And how much wisdom was there in the counsel he gave them! He told them to make that land in which they were sojourning their home, to 'build houses,' and 'plant vineyards,' and 'take

wives,' and act in all respects as if they were settled there, waiting the Lord's time for deliverance. He foretold the destruction, and pronounced the doom, of the lying prophets, who had led the people to 'trust in a lie;' and he assured them, that previous to the time of their deliverance a great spirit of prayer would be poured out on them, and that it would be in answer to prayer that restoration and deliverance would come. 'Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you; and ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.' Let us mark these things, and enter upon the duties of a new week in the remembrance of them. Let us use all the influence that God in his providence has given us for the benefit of the brethren. Let us be occupied with immediate duty. Let us pray even for those who persecute us. Let us 'seek the Lord with all our heart,' that we may find him. There is such a blessed promise connected with such earnest seeking. And let us ever be well assured, that whatever advantage may be in the meantime secured, 'lying lips' are full of cruelty, and will be brought down in dishonour to the dust.

PRAYER.

O thou ever blessed God, we would approach thee this morning in faith, believing that thou art, and that thou art the rewarder of all them that diligently seek thee. Do thou hear and answer us in the Son of thy love. O Lord, we are sinners exceedingly in thy sight. We are full of shortcoming. We are full of iniquity. Our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. We do acknowledge, with grief and self-abasement, that we have been transgressors from the womb, and that thou mightest justly have visited us in judgment, and stained all thy raiment with our blood. Our great sin, O God, has been, that we have neglected and despised thy gospel. This is the condemnation, that light hath come into the world, and we have loved darkness rather than light, because our deeds have been evil. A deceived heart hath led us aside. Lord, change our hearts. Give us a new heart, and create a right spirit within us. Wash us in the blood of atonement, and purge away all our sin. Give us that delightful confidence in thee, which, by the Spirit, is begotten in the heart. Give us the sweet sense of forgiveness, the blessedness of the man whose iniquity is pardoned, whose sin is covered. Give us the spirit of adoption, whereby we shall be enabled to cry, Abba, Father, and to hold fast the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end. We lament that we have experienced so little of the enlargement of the gospel. Pour out upon us the spirit of prayer and of supplication. May we be enabled to make known all our wants to thee.

May we seek thee with all our hearts, that we may find thee according to the promise. May we ever remember that thou art a God of truth, that thou hatest iniquity, and that liars are an abomination in thy sight. Lord, do thou accompany with thy rich blessing all the exercises in which thy people have been engaged on the past sabbath. May the fruit be unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. May thy people have been fitted and prepared thereby for all thy will. Grant, O God, that we may be enabled on the strength of that meat to go many days. We have been with thee upon the mount. We are now about to go down again into the world. May we carry with us the savour of divine things. May our faces shine like theirs who have been upon the mount with God. May we have grace given us so to act, in all our intercourse with our fellow-men, that they will be constrained to take notice of us that we have been with Jesus. Deliver us from a worldly spirit. Save us from the evil that is in the world. Save us from the evil that is in our own heart. Lord, let thy way be known in all the earth, thy saving health among all nations. Hasten that happy time when the heathen will be given to the Son for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Bless each of us before thee. Hear our prayer, and when thou hearest, do thou answer and forgive, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LXIV.

SCRIPTURE—1 THESSALONIANS V.

REMARKS.

It has been well remarked by a judicious commentator, that 'curious inquiries about times and seasons are commonly unprofitable and vain.' At all events, we are, in the commencement of this chapter, assured of an event which it becomes us habitually to realize. Nothing can be plainer than that there was a degree of prominency given, in the early ages of the church, to the fact of the second coming of the Lord, which is now in a great measure lost. Look for example at this very epistle. In every chapter the solemn and awakening event is referred to. In the end of chapter first he speaks of 'waiting for his Son from heaven.' In the end of chapter second he asks, 'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?' In the end of chapter third, in the end of chapter fourth, and again, both towards the commencement and towards the close of that which has been read, the same great and animating theme is referred to. Let no one

say, then, that it ought not to be prominent. Let no one say that it was not much in the apostle's heart.

There may be, as there are, differences of opinion with regard to the time, and the circumstances, and the object, of the second advent of our Lord; but the doctrine itself is one, which ought to form the rallying point of the church's hope in the future, as the decess which he accomplished at Jerusalem forms the grand basis of its confidence in the past. We find this hope pervading the New Testament writings. 'The Lord is at hand,' says he to the Philippians. He charges Timothy, before the Lord Jesus Christ, who would 'judge the quick and the dead at his appearing.' He speaks to Titus 'of looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus.' And the last words of Jesus to his church were, 'Surely I come quickly.' When we read all this in the word of God, what can we say but that the church has fallen, in a great measure, from the realization of a doctrine which was once bound close upon her heart? It will be a fearful event to the wicked. 'Sudden destruction will come upon them, and travail, as upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.' But it will be different with regard to the people of God. It is what they look forward to with hope. It is an event which of all others will be the most glorious. The practical effect of the realization of it in their hearts is expressed in these words: 'Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.' Let us be awake, performing the high functions of Christians; watching on every hand; abounding in labours of love, and praying; for upon the prayers of God's people depends the upholding of the world. Christians little realize either their high destinies or their high duties, otherwise they could not 'sleep as do others.' And if there is any thing that is calculated to animate us in respect of these, it is the believing realization of this great truth, that 'the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.' The chapter concludes with an enumeration of Christian duties, accompanied by the language of exhortation and counsel. Let us hear the Spirit speaking them, 'If we know these things, happy are we if we do them.'

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever blessed God, enable us to worship thee in spirit and in truth, and to come into thy presence with the trust and the confidence of thy children. We come to thee at the close of another day, beseeching thee to grant us thy fatherly forgiveness, and to accept of us in Jesus. We look back upon this day, and we see much on account of which we are ashamed in thy sight; much on account of which we ought to be deeply grieved; much unfaithfulness and sin. Pour out upon us the spirit of a true repentance. Enable us to look unto him whom we have pierced, and to mourn. We have to confess this night, that at the best we are unprofitable servants, and we have no hope of pardon

or acceptance except in him who is all our salvation and all our desire. O that we knew and felt more of the plague of our own hearts; that we were brought to a more full and intimate knowledge of all their deceitfulness and all their villainess; that we were led to see how full they are of every thing that is dishonouring to God, so that we might feel more our need of the Spirit, and our need of Christ. We have this day had experience of the evil heart that is in us. How have we been carried away by the world! How have we indulged in the polluted and vain imagination of our hearts! How have we forgotten the God that made us, and lightly esteemed the Rock of our salvation! Lord, our place is in the lowest dust; and we can only say before thee, Unclean, unclean; God be merciful unto us sinners. Almighty Father, do thou carry home to our hearts those precious truths which we have now been reading from thy word. May they be impressed upon us by the Spirit, so that we may experience all their realizing power. May we not sleep as do others. Lord, how unutterably dread is the sleep of that soul which is sunk in darkness and insensibility! Permit us not to sink into such a state. Awaken us to prayer, and to the love of thyself. Quicken us that we may call upon thy name. Make us active and devoted in the ways of righteousness and peace, walking in the footsteps of the blessed Jesus. May we ever remember the coming of the Lord. Behold thou comest quickly. Thou comest with clouds; thou comest for judgment. The Lord is at hand. May we live every day in the realization of this. May it animate us in every duty. May the thought live every day in our hearts, that the Lord cometh; and may we be upheld and comforted by the thought, that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory. In that great and dreadful day, may all here present meet thee, not as an avenging Judge, but as a reconciled Father. We would lie down this night in the faith of this great truth, as those who know not what a day or an hour may bring forth; and we would repose our souls upon the finished work and the all-prevailing intercession of the Lord our Redeemer. Bless all our dear friends, and all connected with us, by whatever tie. Look in mercy upon the poor and the afflicted. Hear the prayer of the destitute. Draw near to those who are drawing nigh to death. And may these the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, find acceptance before thee, through Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 1.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH XXXI.

REMARKS.

In this and the preceding chapter, the return of the Jews from their captivity and dispersion to the land of their fathers is foretold.

The prediction is first announced in direct terms, ver. 1; and then described in varied scenes of beautiful imagery, as it seems to have been presented to the mind of the prophet, ver. 26. As the difficulties in the way of their return might seem insuperable, God was pleased to remind them of what he had done for their fathers of old, who survived the sword and perils in the wilderness. Conducting them safely through fire and water into their rest in Canaan, which might encourage their hope of a similar interposition and like favourable result.

That his love to them was not a recent and sudden attachment, but of ancient origin and long duration, ver. 2. That though the edifice of their civil and ecclesiastical polity was now in ruins, it should be rebuilt and restored, and the daughters of Israel celebrate the happy event with the usual demonstrations of music and the dance, ver. 4. That the mountains of Samaria shall yet become cultivated vineyards, and the clustering grapes so plenty as to be accounted common things, and eaten without the ritual restrictions of the law, (Lev. xix. 23.) that law being then abrogated, ver. 6. Now appear to the prophet's vision, watchmen as heralds on mount Ephraim, (the country of the ten tribes,) proclaiming the jubilee of their release. To intimate the certainty of the event, the ten tribes are addressed as in possession of their own land, and exhorted to go up and worship the Lord God in Zion—praise him for his wonderful works in behalf of his people, and pray for the safety and welfare of their remnant.

Then, as in answer to their prayer, Jehovah calls upon all nations of the world to rejoice in, and celebrate the restoration of Israel, ver. 10—13. Though this great company on their return, came weeping for their own and their fathers' sins, which had occasioned their long exile, and grievous suffering, tears of joy also mingled as they reached the height of Zion, that the Lord, notwithstanding their great unworthiness, had had compassion on them, miserable outcasts in their low and lost estate, ransomed them from the powers that held them captive, and had now blessed them with abundance of those good things, corn, wine, oil, and flocks, which constituted the wealth of Palestine. Nations and isles the most distant, are called upon to celebrate such a wonderful manifestation of the power and goodness of Jehovah in behalf of his people, ver. 14. The worship of God is also represented as restored; for the souls of the priests are said to be satiated with fatness, viz. through abundance of offerings brought to the altar, ver. 15—17. The scene now suddenly changes. Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, so desirous of offspring, is seen risen from her grave in Ramah, and wistfully looking about her for her children who are no where

to be seen; being all carried away into captivity, she is heard loudly bewailing the loss. In the outburst of her grief, she refused to listen to the accents of consolation; but is afterwards soothed and comforted with the assurance that her posterity, though absent, are not irrecoverably lost, but shall yet be restored from the land of the enemy, ver. 18—20. The scene is next diversified by Ephraim, the chief of the ten tribes, and personating the whole, rising into view, appearing in the character and attitude of a mourner for sin, and suppliant for mercy.

His humiliation, confession, and supplication, are graciously accepted by an affectionate forgiving parent.

Next follows (ver. 31—35.) a remarkable prophecy, foretelling a change of the Mosaic economy or religious institution of the Jews, and the introduction of another or new dispensation, full of grace and truth.

In the return of Ephraim, or the ten tribes, we see the process of a sinner's conversion unto God exemplified, and the compassion of our heavenly Father to his offending relenting children beautifully illustrated; and in their privileges and prosperity, are shadowed out the blessings of Christ's redeemed people. Let them value and improve them, and show that his laws are written on their hearts, and practised in their lives.

PRAYER.

O God, we come unto thee believing that thou art, and that thou art the rewarder of them who diligently seek thee; surely it is good for us to draw near unto God. But how shall we, sinful dust and ashes, take upon us to speak unto thee in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and who chargest thine angels with folly? How good and gracious art thou to bear with us so much and so long, and not to have dealt with us as we have sinned, nor requited us according to our deserts, but hast mercifully spared us, and waited on us to do us good; condescending even to treat with us by means of thy word, Spirit, and providence, to bring us to an affecting sense of the evil of our character, and danger of our situation, and persuade us to turn and live. But, alas! we have not listened to thy calls and counsels as we ought; we have been refractory and unsubmitive under those chastenings which were designed and calculated for our good. As moral Governor of the world, who lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity, transgression of thy law, and rebellion against thy authority, cannot, shall not pass unpunished. But we know that thou hast no pleasure in afflicting or grieving the children of men. It is we who are the authors and procurers of all the evils we suffer, and when thou chastenest, it is for our profit. For, sustaining the near and endearing relation of a Father, thou hast the compassionate regards and sympathies of an affectionate parent, and we are

persuaded that thou art willing to receive into thy favour and forgiveness the returning, however prodigal, son; there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. Hast thou not said, Come and let us reason together, and though your sins be as crimson and scarlet, they shall be as snow and as wool. Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. May the reply of our hearts be, Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. We thank thee for the new covenant dispensation of great and precious promises, under which we have the happiness to live. May we be enabled suitably to value the high and holy privileges which we enjoy, and gladly to avail ourselves of such inestimable blessings so freely proffered. May we be all taught of thee, who teacheth savingly and to profit, that our minds may be suitably instructed, impressed, and improved. May we all know thee, so as to love and delight ourselves in thee, and love thy law which is holy, just, and good, and in the keeping of which there is so great a reward. Vouchsafe to be our God, and make us all thy people, whose habitual aim and endeavour it is to conduct ourselves in some measure worthy of thee, and as children of so many mercies. Inscribe thy law upon our minds, that it may be the master principle of action in and rule of our life. Be merciful to our unrighteousness, and in whatever we daily come short of thy glory, and our duty; our sins and iniquities remember no more. Let goodness and mercy continue to follow us all the days of our life, and may our dwelling at last be in thy house eternal in the heavens, for all that we ask is in the name and for the sake of our Mediator and High Priest, whom thou hearest always. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXVI. 3.

SCRIPTURE—2 THESSALONIANS I.

REMARKS.

After writing his former epistle to the Thessalonians, the apostle learned that they had misunderstood his meaning respecting the coming of Christ at the day of judgment, as if that awful event was just at hand, and would happen in their own time. In consequence of this impression, some already were become idle, giving up their secular employments, as inconsistent or interfering with their preparations for this all-important, all-absorbing event; he, therefore, wrote them this second epistle to remove their misapprehension on that subject, to encourage and comfort them under their present

sufferings for the sake of their religious profession and a good conscience; and farther recommends the practice of several Christian virtues.

This epistle, like the former, is addressed to the church of the Thessalonians in general, which seems not yet to have been completely organized, 1 Thess. v. 12. As Silvanus and Timothy assisted the apostle in first preaching the gospel, and founding the church in Thessalonica, they are joined with him in his salutation to the Christian brethren, and in prayers for them.

As the apostle loved his new converts, and felt much solicitude for them in their very trying circumstances, he begins his letter by offering up a fervent prayer, that grace or the special favour of God in its richest manifestations, and peace, including all manner of happiness, might be vouchsafed them from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle and his fellow-labourers had prayed chap. iii. 12, 'that the Lord would make the Thessalonians increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men even as they did towards them.' This prayer (ver. 3.) was not in vain.

Ver. 4. The apostle was so much gratified with such an expression of Christian principle and feeling in so recent converts, that he rejoiced to acquaint others with their distinguished faith and patience, under all the persecution and tribulation which they endured; and to encourage the Thessalonians to persevere in faith and fortitude, he now tells them how much they had been approved and commended by him, and how highly they were esteemed in other churches of God.

Ver. 5, 6. The sufferings to which they were now subjected, and which they sustained with such exemplary faith and patience, served as a token and pledge of a coming judgment. Ver. 7. 'Rest with us.' As God, the righteous governor of the world, will assuredly punish those who vex and persecute his people, so in all their tribulations he awards them rest or comfort, having inward peace or rest from all distressing anxiety and fear, founded on a consciousness of their acceptance with God through Christ, and a good hope through grace of a blessed and glorious immortality. Thus, though Paul and his fellow-labourers were grievously troubled on every side, yet, as they say, they were not distressed; though perplexed, they were not in despair; though in the world they had tribulation, in Christ they had peace; so that, though apparently sorrowful, they were always rejoicing. The apostle refers to the second coming of Christ, when their 'rest' would be complete.

This second coming is for the purpose of awarding righteous retributions. In the first place, to take vengeance on them that know not God; and, secondly, on those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who receive not with gratitude and joy the grand and supremely interesting discoveries of the gospel, who enter not into its gracious purport and design, comply not with its earnest urgent calls and invitations.

But though Jesus Christ will be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on the disobedient and impenitent, he also comes to be glorified in his saints.

or those whom he has graciously selected and set apart and sanctified for himself.

The apostle, applying what he had said about saints in general to the Thessalonians, states that, because of their believing the gospel which he preached to them, they also should form a part of that happy number in and by whom Christ would be admired and glorified.

Ver. 11. Wherefore, seeing the Thessalonians had such a glorious prospect before them at the coming of Christ, the apostle assures them, that he and his fellow-labourers always prayed for them, ceased not in their stated times of prayer to offer up fervent intercessions in their behalf, that God, whom they addressed under the appropriate relation of their God in covenant, would render and reckon them worthy, fit, or meet for the state of glory and blessedness to which they were called by the gospel; the prize of the high calling. Next that he would fulfil the good pleasure of his goodness, the sole and sovereign dictate of his surpassing benevolence in their behalf, and render their faith so sure and vigorous as to produce in them all holy tempers, and corresponding good works, ver. 12. The end proposed and sought to be attained is, that the name or character, and perfections of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in them, by their walking worthy of him, and of their high and holy vocation; and that they again may be glorified in him, that is, be approved and honoured by him now, and may hereafter share in his glory and felicity, according to the exuberant grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER.

Most great and gracious God, we thy guilty polluted children of the dust, are taking upon us to speak unto thee the Most High, whom we have so often and grievously offended. We do bless thee that thou hast not dealt with us as we have sinned, nor requited our ill; but in the midst of deserved wrath hast remembered us with undeserved mercy. Truly it is of the Lord's mercies that we have not been consumed, and how much more that we enjoy all things pertaining to life and godliness. We thank thee for the means of grace, and that our season of merciful visitation is still prolonged, that a Saviour mighty, and willing as mighty to save, has been provided for us, and is presented to us in the gospel; that we are not only permitted, but exhorted and urged to come to him and be saved. May we be persuaded and enabled cordially to receive him whom thou hast sent to seek and save us; and willingly yield up ourselves to his saving offices and influences, as desirous to be saved from the love and service of sin now, as from its penal consequences hereafter. May it be given us in behalf of Christ to believe on his name, and may our faith evince its genuineness and power, by growing exceedingly, and effectually working in us grateful returns of love to him who first loved

us, and by abounding in all the charities of life to one another. We have great reason to be thankful that we are not subjected to sore privations and persecutions, as many of thy people have been, on account of our religious profession; but may avow our adherence and allegiance to thee, and worship thee according to our consciences, and none to make us afraid. May the blessings of religious liberty, which we so happily enjoy, be long continued in this our native country, and be speedily extended over the world. But as we may not expect exemption from troubles and trials as they may be needful for us, grant that we may be suitably exercised under them, so that they may yield to us the peaceable fruits of righteousness. May our faith in the wisdom and goodness of him who appoints them, enable us not only humbly to submit to, but acquiesce in them, and to bear them with meekness and patience, as the chastening of an affectionate parent for our good, who does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men. We rejoice in thy paternal government, that nothing does or can happen to us without thy knowledge, permission, or appointment; and that when thou shalt judge the world in righteousness, thou wilt rectify the apparently unequal allotments of thy dispensations here, when it will be manifest that thou hast done all things wisely and well. May our minds be suitably solemnized with the awful prospect of the glorious coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to judgment, and our appearing before him to receive our everlasting award, according to our character and works here. God forbid that we, who enjoy such superior advantages now, should not know thee the true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent; should not now fully comply with all thy gracious calls and counsels addressed to us by the gospel, and so at last be punished with everlasting destruction from thy blissful presence. But believing the grand and supremely interesting truths respecting Jesus Christ testified to us in the gospel, being united and assimilated to him now, may we be of the happy number of those in that day, in whom his divine workmanship and image shall be gloriously manifested, and celebrated by all the heavenly hosts, as trophies to the praise and glory of his grace, and admired and praised by us as all our salvation, and all our desire. May God give us suitable worthiness and meetness for this inheritance of the saints in light, the object and hope of our high and holy calling, and fulfil in us the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power, that

Christ may now be more and more honoured by us, and we by him. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH XXXIII.

REMARKS.

In this chapter our attention is directed to the return of Israel and Judah from their long captivity. Jeremiah was now in the court of the prison, where he received this oracle; but though he was bound, 'the word of God was not bound.' It came to him the second time, as if to intimate the certainty of the event—the vision is doubled. The second causes, or means, no doubt would intervene. Jehovah distinctly asserts himself to be the maker, or rather doer, of what he was to reveal. He bids Jeremiah ask, and he would show him great and mighty things which he would bring to pass. The prophets knew not always the full import or design of the things which they uttered; and Jeremiah, though not without information on this interesting subject, is thus prepared to expect farther communications upon it.

The people of Judah had not yet gone into captivity, when their return from it is here foretold by him who has the times and seasons in his own power.

The cause of their going into captivity, it appears, was their wickedness. Men are the authors of their own misery. God does not unnecessarily nor willingly afflict the children of men. 'It is their own wickedness that corrects them,' and is the source of all the evils they suffer. Thus (ver. 5.), on account of their wickedness, God hid his face, withdrew his favour from the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and then, though they fought against the Chaldeans, they could not prevail. The result was only to fill their houses with dead bodies of the slain. But he promises (ver. 6.) to heal their breaches and disorders, whether political or religious; restore them to moral health, and bless them with abundance of peace and prosperity. For (ver. 7.) he would cause the captive tribes to return to the land of their fathers (ver. 8.), freely pardon their sins, and restore them to the possessions and privileges of their nation as at the beginning. Now it appears that this restoration does not refer to the return of the two tribes from their captivity of seventy years in Babylon, but of the ten tribes also; for (ver. 7.) the Lord says, 'I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel, to return.' Both appeared in perspective to the prophet, on the same field of vision, though not as contemporary events; but the near accomplishment of the one might serve as a pledge and earnest of the fulfilment of the other. Next, it is not a partial, but a national return that is meant, for it is announced in general terms, 'the captivity of Israel and of Judah.' Chap. xxx. 3. 'I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord.' Chap. xxxi. 1. Rom. xi. 26. 'So all Israel shall be saved.' Some indeed of the ten tribes joined the two on their

return from Babylon; but not in a body. Farther, by the return of Israel is not meant their conversion merely to the faith and obedience of the Messiah, but a restoration also to the land of their fathers; for the description of places to be inhabited by them (ver. 10—13.) is so marked and minutely distinguished, as to be incapable of a figurative interpretation, and must therefore be taken in its obvious and literal acceptance.

It is likewise evident that this predicted restoration is yet future. For, in the first place, the ten tribes have not returned in a body; and next, if David (according to ver. 17.) shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of Israel, it is certain that, since the captivity in Babylon to the present day, there has not been one of the royal line of David sitting upon the throne of Judah and Israel; nor (according to ver. 18.) have the Jews had a regular priesthood of the order of Levi in the stated exercise of their sacred functions; from which we seem warranted to conclude, that this prediction refers to a future period yet to come.

Farther, it appears that this restoration of Judah and Israel will be so marvellous as to excite the wonder and interest of all nations of the world. Their restoration will afford great cause for joy, as it will usher in the general conversion of the Gentile world, and thus be, as the apostle expresses it, life from the dead. And what ground of praise also to him, whose goodness and mercy endureth for ever, and whose faithfulness is from generation to generation!

From the promise and prospect of such temporal good, the prophet, as usual with the sacred writers, passes on to announce a greater spiritual good, even the coming of Messiah, there denoted (ver. 15.) by the Branch of righteousness, the rod or shoot from the decayed root or stem of Jesse, as to his human nature, Isa. xi. 1. The Branch of the Lord, produced and sustained by him, appointed to rule and exercise judgment and righteousness in the protection and government of his people. Many of the branches, or descendants of David, who filled his throne, were unrighteous; but this Branch is emphatically the *righteous* one; righteous in himself, and the author of righteousness to others. Ver. 16. 'In those days of Messiah's reign shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the (name) wherewith he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness,' the 'Jehovah our righteousness.'

Then follows (ver. 17, 18.) the promise of an unbroken succession of rulers, in the line of David and of the priesthood, to perform their sacred functions. But seeing the Jews have had neither a king nor priesthood of their own since the destruction of Jerusalem and dispersion of their nation, this promise remains still to be accomplished. For the certainty of its fulfilment an appeal is made to the stable course of nature in the unvarying ordinances of heaven, ver. 21. And as some might be ready to suppose, from suffering the Jews to be so long scattered over the earth, every where despised and maltreated, that God had entirely cast them off, and would never gather and restore them, he repudiates the unworthy supposition by again referring to the uniform regularity

and stability of the ordinances of heaven as a pledge of his faithfulness.

PRAYER.

Great fear is due unto thee, O God, in the meetings of thy saints, and thou art to be held in reverence of all them that would acceptably approach thee. May we have grace wherewith to serve thee. For as we are unworthy to come into thy presence at all, we feel utterly unequal to order our thoughts and speech aright, and to commune with thee on our most momentous interests, which involve our present peace and everlasting welfare. Be pleased to vouchsafe us the promised aid of the Spirit of grace and of supplication, to help our infirmities, to teach us what things to pray for, and to give us a proper frame of spirit with which to ask them. In thee compassions flow. Hadst thou delighted in the destruction of sinners, hadst thou been unwilling to save, thou wouldst not have provided such a ransom to deliver them from the lowest hell; thou wouldst not still continue to wait on us to be gracious, and even to beseech us to be reconciled unto thee. We have no reason to suspect thy willingness to save; but we have great cause to fear lest we come short of salvation through the unbelief and impenitence of our own hearts. Preserve us from deceiving ourselves with a name to live, while we are dead; from saying peace, peace, to ourselves, when thou sayest there is no peace; from imagining ourselves safe, though in imminent peril. Save us from listening to the enticing temptations of the world; from yielding to the corrupt inclinations of our own evil hearts, and from being led captive or astray by our spiritual enemies; and above all, save us from the fearful guilt and irreparable doom of self-destruction. But however great our spiritual destitution, and imminent our danger from without and within, we bless thee that our case is not yet desperate, that we are still in the land of the living and place of hope. Thou hast laid our help on one who is mighty to save; and being commanded to look to him alone for salvation, we feel warranted to call and claim him Jehovah our Righteousness, to say, In the Lord I have righteousness and strength. May a sense of our infinite obligations to our redeeming God and Saviour constrain us to returns of grateful love and duty; and may his grace, that bringeth salvation, so conspicuously manifested in the gospel, teach us effectually to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Wherein soever we are called, may it be our earnest desire and study therein to abide

with God. Conscientious and faithful in the discharge of the duties of the several stations and relations in life, may we make our light so to shine, that others, seeing our good works, may be won to glorify thee our Father in heaven. May thy great name be hallowed, and the kingdom and reign of the Redeemer be speedily extended and established over the whole earth. May the means for widely diffusing the light and influence of the truth as it is by Jesus, be multiplied and blessed with abundant success. We rejoice in the bright and happy prospects which yet await thine ancient people the Jews, in the latter days. We thank thee for the sympathy and interest excited, and the exertions put forth on their behalf, throughout the churches. Rend the veil of ignorance and prejudice that is upon their mind, that they may see and be convinced that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the true Messiah, and that it is vain for them to look for another, seeing there is no other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved. Hear the prayers that are daily offered up for their conversion to the faith of Christ, and restoration to the land of their fathers, that with the fullness of the Gentiles they may constitute one great fold, under the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls. May thy work prosper and prevail more among ourselves, especially in our own souls, and in all who are near and dear to us. May we become wiser and better daily, more fit for living, ready for dying, and meet for thy heavenly kingdom. And all that we ask is in the name, and for the sake of him whom thou hearest always. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 15.

SCRIPTURE—2 THESSALONIANS II.

REMARKS.

Having in the preceding chapter mentioned the coming of the Lord to judgment, the apostle takes occasion to correct an error into which some had fallen, through misapprehension of his words or meaning, as if this coming was about to take place in their own time. He therefore expressly guards them against entertaining such a notion, however they might have heard it, whether as being a revelation of the prophetic spirit to some one, or as supposed to have been taught by himself when at Thessalonica, or by a forged letter from him since he left it. He earnestly beseeches and adjures them by this awful advent, and their gathering together to meet the Lord in the air, not to give heed to such groundless fancies. For before that event takes place, there shall be (ver. 3.) a falling away first, literally, the apos-

tacy from the faith once delivered to the saints, called the apostacy by way of eminence and emphasis, and because referred to by the prophet Daniel, and of which the apostle himself had personally before apprized them. The principal errors of which it consists are enumerated by the apostle, 1 Tim. iv. 1—3.

Again, this apostacy (ver. 3.) is to be headed and conducted by one, who is designated the man of sin, the son of perdition, and, in ver. 8, that wicked or lawless one; all which import his extreme malignity, wickedness, destructiveness, and fearful doom.

But though spoken of as one, we are not to consider him as a particular individual, but rather as a series or succession of persons, who are all, indeed, as one man, animated and governed by the same spirit, one in object and pursuit. This head of the apostacy is further described, having his seat or throne in the temple of God (ver. 4.), or Christian church, in which, of course, he is a member or minister; as arrogating and affecting supreme authority; opposing, and exalting himself above all that is called God, as magistrates, who are sometimes so denominated; nay, usurping even the prerogatives of Deity himself, above all that is worshipped; daring to make and unmake laws and ordinances at pleasure. The apostle had made the Thessalonians acquainted with this grand apostacy when he resided among them; and showed them that this anti-Christian power was then secretly at work, but let or hindered for a time; that when this obstruction was removed, then that wicked or lawless one would be revealed in all the energy and extent of his malignant power; and having reached his height of domination and wickedness, by the working or agency of satan, he would seek to maintain it by asserting the possession of supernatural powers, enabling him to work miracles, and thereby establish his claims to supremacy over all persons and things, and all matters civil and ecclesiastical, which in fact, however, were only lying wonders, or wonders of lies, practised on the credulity of mankind, brought forward with all manner of artifice and circumstance to mislead and deceive; and that the success of his deception would be among those who, because they receive not the truth in the love of it, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, are judicially given up of God to embrace and believe lies, even such a gross and palpable lie as transubstantiation. See Gal. ii. 16; Col. ii. 21, 22; 1 Tim. iv. 3.

But though the man of sin shall indeed have great power and reign, as we have seen, and deceive the nations of the earth, to comfort the hearts of Christians, and support their faith and patience under so long and grievous a trial, the apostle states that his days are numbered, and his doom pronounced. Whom the Lord will consume gradually; weaken 'with the breath of his mouth'—the preaching of the word in its purity and power; and at last will utterly destroy by the brightness of his coming, or signal interposition of judgment. While those who profess themselves Christians, but have not a sincere love of the truth, having more pleasure in error and unrighteousness, are judicially given up by God to have their own will and way, and left to embrace the delusion of error to their ruin; the apostle would confirm and comfort real Christians against the fear of thus falling away,

or of such judgment coming upon them. Their preservation is secured, for God has chosen them to salvation, not on account of any foreseen merit which they might possess, but because he loved them. Nor is this love of recent origin, for they were beloved of him from the beginning of time, before the world was. The happy fruits and effects of this choice were apparent in their sanctification by the Spirit, and their cordial belief of the truth, which never fails to verify itself by corresponding good works. These circumstances afforded great cause for thanksgiving to God on their behalf, which the apostle now cordially offers up. The apostle exhorts them to stand fast in the belief and love of the truth, without wavering or receding; and to hold the traditions or doctrines which they had been taught, whether by word when he was personally among them, or by this and the former epistle sent them in absence. To this exhortation the apostle subjoins a fervent prayer, ver. 16, 17.

PRAYER.

O God, how awfully great art thou, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. We thank thee that, in despite of all opposition, thou hast in every age a seed to serve thee; that thy sanctuary is with men, and thy church founded on a rock, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. Many times, and in various ways, have enemies afflicted her from her youth, but have not prevailed, for thou, who art mighty to save, wert in the midst of her. Even in the great defection from the faith and purity of the gospel, which has so much and so long injured the interests, and marred the beauty of thy church, thou didst not leave thyself without a witness to display a banner in behalf of the truth. And now, O Lord, as we have seen the rise and reign of this mystery of iniquity, as foretold in the word, may our faith be yet farther confirmed, if it please thee, by increasing tokens of its speedy decline and ruin. May the light of the glorious gospel of thy Son soon scatter the shades of ignorance, error, and superstition, which have so long shed such a baleful influence over so large a portion of the earth. May the Spirit of thy mouth, by the gospel preached in purity and power, more and more convince men of the evil and danger of departing from thee, from that only rule of faith and life which thou hast given us, listening to the traditions and commandments of fallible men. May the time to favour Zion soon come, when thou wilt appear in thy glory, to the purification and extension of thy church; and the signal destruction of the man of sin. Preserve us from all dislike or indifference to any portion of that truth which is able to save our souls, or from holding the truth in unrighteousness; that we may be kept from being ensnared or enslaved

by the craft and malice of evil spirits, and being judicially given up by thee to self-deception, and to the fearful delusion of believing and embracing lies to our destruction. Save us from the condemnation of loving darkness rather than the light; from not believing the truth, but having pleasure in unrighteousness. May our experience of the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit on our hearts, through belief of the truth, afford the satisfying and cheering evidence that we are beloved and chosen of thee to share in the glory of Christ, to which we are now called by his gospel, and for which we can never enough feel too grateful. Having this witness in ourselves, and such a good hope through grace, may we be strengthened and encouraged to stand fast wherein we have attained, and keep in mind and memory realizing impressions of the instructions we have received of divine things. And may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort our hearts, and stablish us in every good word and work. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 5—9.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH XXXV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The Rechabites, of whom such honourable mention is made in this chapter, belonged to a tribe of the Kenites, 1 Chron. ii. 55; and appear to have been descended from Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. We read in Num. x. 29—33, of the invitation which Moses gave Hobab, his brother-in-law, to accompany the children of Israel to the promised land; and it appears, from Judg. i. 16, and iv. 11, that the invitation was accepted, and that Hobab's descendants settled in the land of Canaan, though they obtained no inheritance in it, but dwelt in tents as 'strangers,' ver. 7.

Jonadab, who was the author of those rules of self-denial which the Rechabites observed, lived about three hundred years before Jeremiah, in the reign of Jehu, 2 Kings x. 15—26. From the marked attention paid to him by that king, it would appear that Jonadab was a man of some eminence, and zealous for the honour and worship of the true God. The reason which induced Jonadab to enjoin the Rechabites neither to drink wine, nor build houses, nor till the soil, is mentioned (ver. 7.), 'that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers.' This, it is obvious, would be the natural result of a strict observance of Jonadab's rules. For not only would their temperate mode of living tend to promote health and longevity; but by refraining from the cul-

tivation of the soil, and possessing no landed property, the Rechabites would avoid giving offence to the Jews among whom they dwelt. The whole land of Canaan was allotted to the various tribes and families of the children of Israel; and, therefore, if the Rechabites had engaged in agriculture, or shown a desire to obtain any inheritance, the jealousy of the Israelites would instantly have been awakened, an unpleasant collision might have ensued, which would lead to the expulsion of the Rechabites from Judea, and deprive them of the religious privileges which they enjoyed. Jonadab, therefore, from motives both of prudence and piety, prescribed rules to his family well adapted to secure to them the unmolested possession of their civil immunities and their religious advantages. The Rechabites were proselytes to the Jewish religion; and many of them were 'scribes,' who employed themselves in copying or expounding the book of the law, 1 Chron. ii. 55. As a reward for their obedience to Jonadab's commands, it is said (ver. 19.), that 'Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before the Lord for ever.' This prophecy has been literally fulfilled. The Beni-Rechab, sons of Rechab, still exist in Arabia, a 'distinct and easily distinguishable' race. They are called also Beni-Kheiber, probably from Heber the Kenite, Judg. iv. 11. They boast of their descent from Rechab, observe the rules of Jonadab, and profess pure Judaism. 'To this present moment,' says a recent traveller, 'they drink no wine, and have neither vineyard, nor field, nor seed, but dwell like Arabs in tents, and are wandering nommades. They believe and observe the law of Moses by tradition, for they are not in possession of the written law.'*

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Observe, first, The filial piety of these Rechabites. During many hundred years they strictly complied with the injunctions of their father Jonadab, for which they obtained a striking testimony of God's approbation. The fifth commandment is the first with promise. Obedience to it is an important element in that godliness which has 'the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.' Let children, therefore, be incited, by the example here presented, to obey their parents in the Lord; and let them look to a witness nobler still, to the Son of God himself, who has left this instructive example to the young, that 'he was subject unto his parents.' And let parents also learn how important is the influence with which God has invested them over the minds of their children.

Observe, second, How desperately wicked is the heart of man! While the Rechabites 'obeyed their father's commandment,' the children of Israel disobeyed the commandments of God, notwithstanding all his goodness, warnings, and entreaties to them.

PRAYER.

Our Father who art in heaven, we would unite together in acknowledging, with grateful hearts, thy watchful care and thy paternal kindness to-

* Rev. Joseph Wolff's Missionary Journal, 1824, pp. 257, 261.

ward us, thine unworthy children. Thou art the Father of our spirits, the former of our bodies, and the giver of every good and perfect gift. Thou hast bestowed upon us many temporal and spiritual blessings. Thou hast liberally supplied our daily returning wants. Thou hast preserved us from danger. Thou hast delivered us out of temptation, and guided us in difficulty, and comforted us in sorrow. And when we look back on all the way by which thou hast led us, we may truly say that goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our lives. But, O Lord, we must confess, with shame and sorrow, that though thou hast nourished and brought us up as children, yet we have rebelled against thee. We have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and are no more worthy to be called thy children. We have not cherished toward thee those sentiments of filial reverence and love, nor rendered unto thee that filial obedience which are due to our kind and beneficent Father in heaven. And though thou hast often spoken to us in the holy scriptures, not only by thy servants the prophets, but also by thine own Son; though thou hast warned us by the terrors of the law, and hast besought us by the still small voice of the gospel, and by the striving of thy Holy Spirit, to turn unto thee and live; yet, O Lord, we must confess that we have refused to obey thy voice speaking to us from heaven. O do thou awaken us all to a just sense of our guilt. Give unto each of us that godly sorrow for sin which worketh repentance unto salvation; and lead us, in the exercise of a lively faith, to that fountain which has been opened for sin and uncleanness, that so we may be washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. O God, be merciful unto us, and bless us. Cause thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved. May we be cleansed from all our sins in the atoning blood of Christ. May we be clothed with his perfect righteousness, so that we may be accepted in the Beloved, and may enjoy the peace of God, which passeth understanding. Deliver us from a spirit of bondage, causing us again to fear; but grant us a spirit of adoption, whereby we shall cry, Abba, our Father. May the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; and may our souls be replenished with his saving grace and sanctifying influences, so that henceforth we may live as obedient children, and may walk steadfastly in the way that leadeth to everlasting life. Enable us to deny ourselves to all ungodliness and worldly lusts; to live as pilgrims and strangers upon the earth; and to

prepare, by patient continuance in well-doing, for that better country which the Saviour is preparing for them that love him. O Lord, let thy kingdom come. Let thy will be done by us, and by all our fellow-creatures throughout the earth, even as it is done in heaven. Make known thy salvation, and show thy righteousness openly in the sight of the heathen. Have mercy on the sons and daughters of affliction. Hear their cry of distress, and send them the relief and consolation suited to their various circumstances. Be very gracious, O Lord, to our friends and relatives. Our heart's desire and prayer for them is, that they may be saved. Dwell in this family. Be thou the God of each member of it, and make us all thy people. Accept of our cordial thanksgivings for the mercies of the last night. Take us into thy holy protection this day; and be with us, to bless us and to do us good, both now and ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXVII. 1—7. (*Second Version*.)
SCRIPTURE—2 THESSALONIANS III.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. The apostle had concluded the preceding chapter with an earnest prayer for the Thessalonian converts; and he begins this chapter with requesting their prayers for himself and his fellow-labourers in the ministry. Ministers and people should pray for each other. They should pray especially that every obstacle to the success of the gospel may be removed, and that the word of the Lord may be glorified by the conversion of sinners, and the holy lives of believers. Observe the character of those who persecuted the preachers of the truth, and rejected their testimony. They were 'unreasonable,' impenetrable to conviction, and 'wicked' in their lives and conduct. The apostle seems here to refer to the insurrection of the Jews at Corinth, when they dragged him before Gallio, Acts xviii. 12. For though it is mentioned, in the note appended to this epistle, that it was written at Athens, yet that note is of no authority; and as Silvanus and Timotheus were with Paul when it was written (chap. i. 1.), while they did not join him at Athens, but at Corinth (Acts xviii. 1, 5.), it appears that he wrote this epistle from the latter city.

Ver. 6, 14. Those professing Christians who walk disorderly, and bring dishonour upon religion, ought to be subjected to the censure of the church, and separated from the communion of the faithful. Before proceeding, however, to excommunicate them, milder methods should be tried. They must not be counted as enemies, but admonished as brethren.

Ver. 7—9. As there were some among the Thessalonians who neglected the pursuits of honest in-

dustry, and ate the bread of idleness, the apostle reminds them of the example of diligence which he had himself given, by labouring with his own hands in his occupation of tent-making. He had refused to receive at Thessalonica that temporal support which he was entitled to, from those among whom he ministered; just as at Corinth, also, he waived his right to subsistence from the Christians there, and accepted it from another quarter, that 'the gospel might not be hindered,' and that they might see he was not actuated by mercenary motives in preaching it, 2 Cor. xi. 7—9; xii. 14.

Ver. 10—12. Those who are able, and yet refuse to work, ought to receive nothing out of the funds allotted to the poor. Idleness is the parent of many vices. It renders men 'busy-bodies,' 'for usually none are so busy in other men's matters as they that neglect their own.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou hast commanded us to pray; and thou hast promised to teach us, by thy Holy Spirit, how to pray, and what to pray for. And in obedience to thy command, and trusting in thy promise, we would this evening come to thy throne of grace to make known our wants and our requests to the hearer of prayer. O Lord, near the voice of our supplication when we cry unto thee, when we lift up our hands toward thy holy oracle. Let our prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. We would adore thee, O God, as the first and the last, as the fountain of all existence, and the sum of all excellence, and the giver of all true happiness. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, thou didst exist, in the solitude and silence of a past eternity, clothed with light as with a garment. And though the works of thy hands are ever changing, yet thou the Lord changest not; thou wilt continue the same, in glory and blessedness, throughout eternal ages. O Lord our God, thou art exceeding great. Who can by searching find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection? Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it. But, O Lord, we would bless thy name that thou hast revealed to us, in thy holy word, as much of thy character and will as is necessary for our guidance and salvation. We thank thee that as thou didst, at sundry times and in divers manners, make thyself known unto the fathers by the prophets, thou hast likewise spoken unto us by thine own Son, who is the brightness of thy glory, and who, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. We thank thee for the inestimable privilege of a translated bible, by which we are en-

abled to read in our own tongue the wonderful works of God, and to understand what great things thou hast done for us through the atoning sacrifice and meritorious obedience of God manifest in the flesh. O that thy blessed word may have free course in our hearts. May it be quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, casting down all our high thoughts, and subduing us unto the obedience of faith. May thy word be glorified in us, and by us. May it be a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path. May we have faith to rest for salvation upon him of whom the scriptures testify. Feeling our ignorance, may we sit daily at the feet of Jesus, with an earnest desire to learn his word, and to know what the will of the Lord is. Feeling our guilt and sinfulness, may we rest all our hopes of pardon and eternal life on the atoning blood and perfect righteousness of our great High Priest. Feeling our weakness and waywardness, may we submit to the authority of the King of Zion. May he render us willing in the day of his power, and defend us from all our spiritual enemies, and rule over us by his word, and reign in our hearts by his Holy Spirit. O Lord, let thy word have free course among all the nations of the earth. May every obstacle to its progress be taken out of the way; and grant that many may run to and fro preaching the everlasting gospel, so that the knowledge of the Lord may be increased, and cover the earth as the waters cover the channel of the sea. Bless and encourage thy servants who have gone to preach among the heathen the unsearchable riches of Christ. May the Lord of the harvest send forth more labourers into his harvest. Bless all the faithful ministers of Christ, of every name and denomination. O Lord, revive thy work in our native land, and send us a time of refreshing from thy presence. Have compassion on the afflicted, spare useful lives, and prepare the dying for death. Be very gracious to all who are near and dear to us. Accept of our thanks for thy watchful care of us this day. Take us into thy holy protection during the night. Let no evil befall us. Let no plague come nigh our dwelling. Raise us up, if it be thy will, to behold the light of a new day; and when we awake, may we still be with thee. Hear us, O Lord, and send an answer of peace, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV. 1—6.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH XLIX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In this chapter the prophet denounces the judgments of God upon various nations for their sins, and especially for the sin of oppressing and insulting the children of Israel. The present condition of the countries here mentioned furnishes a striking commentary on the prophet's graphic predictions; and the testimony of modern travellers proves, beyond all doubt, that prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Ver. 1. One of the reasons is here stated why the Ammonites were to be visited with the divine judgments. It was because they had taken violent possession of the land of Gad, which belonged of right to the children of Israel. See also Ezek. xxv. 1—7. Hence it is foretold (ver. 2.) that Rabbah, the chief city of the Ammonites, 'shall be a desolate heap.' This city was at that time a place of great strength, and it was very advantageously situated in a fertile country. But a recent traveller informs us, that its site is now 'covered with the ruins of private buildings, nothing of them remaining except the foundations and some of the door-posts. The buildings, exposed to the atmosphere, are all in decay.* Thus Rabbah is literally a desolate heap.

Ver. 7. The judgments of God are next denounced upon the descendants of Esau, who dwelt in Edom, or Idumea, and who had shown 'a perpetual hatred' to the children of Israel, Ezek. xxxv. 5. The Edomites were celebrated, in ancient times, for their wisdom, Obad. 8, 9. Idumea is generally regarded as the first seat of learning, and the nursery of the arts and sciences.† It was from thence that the Egyptians and other nations of antiquity derived their knowledge of astronomy and navigation. The book of Job, also, with the discourses of 'Eliphaz the Temanite,' bears testimony to the wisdom of the Edomites. But 'wisdom is no more in Teman, and counsel has perished from the prudent.' The present inhabitants of that country are sunk in the grossest ignorance; in proof of which it may be mentioned, that the clearing away of a little rubbish, merely to allow the water to flow into an ancient cistern, so as to preserve it for their use, is 'an undertaking which (a modern traveller states) is far beyond their views.' Ver. 16—18. Many of the inhabitants of Edom dwelt in caves cut out of the rocks and hills. The ruins of an ancient city of Edom, called Petra (the rock), and situated near mount Hor, where Aaron was buried, bear testimony to its former strength and grandeur, and render it still one of the most interesting and curious remains of ancient art. There are still to be seen at Petra the ruins of palaces, sepulchres, theatres, and temples, all cut out of the solid rock. 'O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, I will bring thee down from thence, saith

the Lord. Also, Edom shall be a desolation; no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.' This prophecy has been so strikingly fulfilled, that a spectator of the scene tells us that 'the barren state of the country (which was once fertile), together with the desolate condition of the city of Petra, without a single human being living near it, strongly verifies the judgment denounced against it.‡

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. How unreasonable is infidelity! The stones of Petra cry out against it; and from the 'desolate' wilderness a voice is heard proclaiming, in reason's ear, that the prophets were inspired by that God who 'declareth the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.'

2. We learn also from this chapter, that nations, as well as individuals, are subject to the over-ruling providence of God. The study of fulfilled prophecy is well calculated to strengthen our conviction of the great truth, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men.

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever blessed God, thou art greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about thee. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. It becometh us, who are sinful dust and ashes, to adore, with reverence and godly fear, the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, who ruleth in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; whose Almighty hand none can stay from working, and to whom none can say, with a prevailing voice, What doest thou? But knowing that the Lord reigneth, therefore would we rejoice, because we know that all the dispensations of thy providence are holy, and just, and good, and shall not fail to promote thy glory, and the happiness of them that love thee. Almighty Father, we rejoice that, while righteousness and judgment are the habitation of thy throne, mercy and truth continually go before thy face. And we would especially rejoice, and give thee thanks, that thou didst devise a scheme of redemption for us, in which mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other. We bless thy name that the gospel

* Burckhardt's Travels in Syria, p. 359.

† Sir Isaac Newton's Chronol. of Ancient Kingdoms, p. 208.

‡ Irby and Manglos' Travels, p. 425. For a full and able exposition of this subject, see Dr Keith's admirable work on the 'Evidence of Prophecy.'

of Jesus Christ, which secures glory to God in the highest, likewise proclaims peace and goodwill to the guilty children of men, and shows us that thou art just, while the justifier of the ungodly who believe in Jesus. O may thy Holy Spirit dispose and enable us to receive the atonement of Christ by faith, and to rest upon this sure and tried foundation, that thus we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Forbid, O Lord, that there should be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, leading us to doubt thy word, or to disbelieve thy promises, or to depart from the living God. May we be admonished by the judgments inflicted upon thine enemies, to forsake all iniquity, and to walk in the light of thy countenance, and in the way of thy commandments. And conscious of our own weakness, we humbly beseech thee to strengthen us with all might by thy Spirit, that so we may overcome the manifold temptations to which we are exposed in this present evil world, and may walk in close and humble fellowship with the Father of our spirits. Take us, O Lord, into thy holy keeping, and preserve us by thy mighty power through faith unto salvation. We desire to offer up our prayers and intercessions in behalf of all whom we ought to bear on our hearts at thy throne. Bless the church of Christ throughout the earth; and grant that, through the word of thy grace, many may be added unto it daily of such as shall be saved. Bless our native land, and all ranks and degrees of persons in it, from the least to the greatest. May pure and undefiled religion flourish more and more in our day. Command thy blessing upon our kindred and friends. Comfort and relieve all who are in affliction. Render us truly grateful unto thee for causing us to lie down in peace, and to awake this morning in safety. Keep us in thy fear all the day long, and help us to live as seeing thee, who art invisible. Graciously hear our prayers, and pardon our sins, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLII. 6—11.

SCRIPTURE—1 TIMOTHY I.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The distinguished person to whom this epistle is addressed, was a native of Lystra, a city of Lycaonia. His father was a Greek, or Gentile; but his mother Eunice was a Jewess; and she, as well as her mother Lois, was eminent for her piety, 2 Tim. i. 5. Under

their pious care, Timothy was brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and made acquainted with the holy Scriptures from his youth, 2 Tim. iii. 15. It is probable, that he was converted to the faith of Christ during Paul's first visit to Lystra, Acts xiv. When Paul came there the second time, Timothy had made such progress in knowledge and grace, that the apostle, by divine direction, ver. 18. selected him as the companion of his travels and labours. Accordingly, Timothy was solemnly ordained to the sacred office, by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery; the apostle joining with them in the performance of this duty, 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6, 7. From that time, this young minister was the constant companion, and the faithful assistant of the apostle, who frequently speaks of him, in language of the tenderest regard, Phil. ii. 19; 1 Thess. iii. 3.

Ver. 3, 4. The apostle reminds Timothy of the reason why he had left him at Ephesus; viz., to oppose the Judaizing teachers, who were endeavouring to draw away the Christian converts from the simplicity of faith. These teachers gave heed to 'fables,' invented to recommend the observance of the Mosaic law, as essential to salvation, also to 'endless genealogies,' in the belief that they would be saved, if they could prove that they had Abraham for their father, ver. 5—12. The apostle explains the end and use of the law, and its perfect consistency with the gospel. The end of both is 'charity,' or that love to God and our neighbour, which is the fulfilling of the law, and the object of the gospel. The law is used unlawfully, when we seek justification by it. The right use of it, is that of a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, and a rule to direct our obedience. When the apostle says, that 'the law is not made for a righteous man,' he does not mean, (as Antinomians imagine), that the Christian is delivered from his obligation to obey the law, as the rule of his life, but that the Christian is delivered from the penalties of the law. 'The righteous man' is under the *directive*, but not under the condemning power of the law. But 'the lawless and disobedient' are still under the curse and condemnation of the law, because they have not fled for refuge to Him who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Ver. 12—18. The apostle magnifies the grace of Christ, in pardoning his sins, and calling him to preach the faith which he once laboured to destroy. In ver. 13. Paul does not mean that his ignorance excused his sin, or deserved the mercy of God. He obtained mercy, only because of the abounding grace of our Lord, ver. 14. His ignorance and unbelief were culpable, inasmuch as there was evidence within his reach, of the truth of the gospel; while he did not seek for it, but shut his eyes to the light. Still, the fact that he sinned in ignorance, while it did not excuse his sins, rendered his case more hopeful. Had he sinned against light and knowledge, had he persecuted and blasphemed knowingly and deliberately; that would have been a near approach to the sin against the Holy Ghost, when it might have been impossible to renew him to repentance. The apostle's meaning may probably be better expressed thus: 'I was before a blasphemer, and a per-

secutor, and injurious, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief, but I obtained mercy.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, we are unworthy to come into thy presence, or even to lift up our eyes to thy holy habitation. Thou canst not look upon sin without abhorrence. Thou art a consuming fire to all the workers of iniquity. Thou hast declared to us in thy holy word that, even though we should keep the whole law, yet if we offend but in one point, we incur thy righteous displeasure. But, O Lord, which of thy commandments have we not broken? which of thy precepts have we not trampled under foot? which of thy mercies have we not despised? We have often sinned against thee in thought, and word, and deed; and have lived without God in the world; and have walked every one in the sight of his own eyes, and after the devices of his own evil heart. Nor can we plead that we have sinned in ignorance, and that we have had no opportunity of knowing our Lord's will. Thou hast cast our lot in a land, where the light of the gospel shines; thou hast given us thy holy word, from our childhood, to make us wise unto salvation; thou hast permitted us, sabbath after sabbath, to hear the joyful sound of heaven's offered mercy; thou hast given us line upon line, and precept upon precept; and thou hast sent forth thy Holy Spirit to strive with our obdurate and rebellious hearts. But, O Lord, we must confess that we have not improved our privileges, or walked worthy of our high and holy vocation; and, therefore, we would lay our hand upon our mouth, and our mouth in the dust, acknowledging that to us belongeth shame and confusion of face, and beseeching that God would be merciful to us sinners. O do thou give unto each of us that broken and contrite heart which thou wilt not despise; and wash us thoroughly in that blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, which crieth not for vengeance, but for mercy, and which shall purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. We rejoice to know that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; and that there is no guilt so aggravated that he cannot remove it, and no heart so polluted that he cannot cleanse it, and no disease so inveterate that he cannot cure it. We would come, therefore, to this great Physician, beseeching him to heal our spiritual diseases, and to cleanse us from all our sins by his atoning blood, and to strengthen us by his Holy Spirit to serve thee, without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives. May we delight in the law of God after the inward man;

may we have the same mind in us that was also in Christ Jesus; may we strive to follow his holy example, and to adorn his doctrine in all things. O Lord, send forth thy light and thy truth to those benighted nations who are still sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death. Bless the preaching of the gospel, and all thy faithful ministers. Bless our beloved country; arrest the progress of infidelity, and superstition, and vice; may thy fear dwell in every heart, and may thy worship be established in every family. Bless the church which thou hast planted in this corner of the land. Draw near, with thy divine consolations, to all who are in trouble or distress. Be gracious to all with whom we are connected, by whatever bond. Pardon the sins which we have committed against thee this day. Watch over us during the silence of the coming night; and spare us, if it be thy will, to see the light of another day; for all we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXVI. 6.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH L.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

This chapter contains predictions of the same events to the church of God and to her enemies, as those foretold in the 45th, 46th, and 47th, &c., of Isaiah. And as the time of their accomplishment drew near, the prophet rises in the awful grandeur and plainness of his style of prediction.

Ver. 1—3. Conquering nations generally respected the religion and the gods of the vanquished; but the God of Abraham had doomed the Babylonians to an exception in this respect, and that the Medes and Persians, coming from the north, should wreak their vengeance on their gods, as well as on themselves, who, in their ravages in Judea, had plundered his holy temple.

Ver. 4—8. The time alluded to in the 4th verse is that which corresponds to the sacking of Babylon by Cyrus, at the head of the Medo-Persian army, and when, as is supposed, on being shown the prophecy of Isaiah, where he is mentioned by name, he issued a decree, permitting the Jews to return to their own land, and to rebuild their temple. God had given them the land of Canaan by covenant with their father Abraham; that covenant he had often renewed: its tenor was, 'If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword,' (Isa. i. 19, 20.) They did refuse and rebel so often, that the Lord was at last provoked to give them up to the bondage of Babylon for the space of seventy years. He had, notwithstanding, given them many assurances, that, on repentance,

they would, at the end of this time, be restored to his favour and all their covenanted privileges. The prophet here represents them as in such a penitent attitude, moving as a great multitude of pilgrims borne down with a sense of guilt, back to the land of their fathers, and determined never again to violate the covenant on which their fathers had obtained it from their God. What Jeremiah so feelingly predicts, Ezra, who lived some time after him, as an eye-witness verifies, in his record of this movement of the Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem. In the 8th verse, the prophet warns them that the time of deliverance is near, by exhorting them to hold themselves in readiness to depart, and, when at liberty to do so, that they must enter upon their long and arduous journey homeward, with a courage exemplified by the he-goat, as he advances the undaunted leader of the rest of the flock.

The remaining part of the chapter is taken up in more minutely describing the desolation that was to come upon Babylon, and the character of those that were to be instrumental in God's hand for effecting it, interspersed, according to the prophetic style, with comfortable assurances that all this was done for the sake of his own people. The Babylonians had been as a rod in God's hand to chastise his people, but they knew it not. They oppressed them to gratify their own blood-thirsty rapacity, ver. 11; and therefore, God was just in dealing by them as they had done unto the Jews, ver. 15.

The Persians excelled in all warlike exercises, especially in arching and in horsemanship, so that the description which the prophet gives of the conquerors of Chaldea, in ver. 9, 14, 29, 42, fixes on them as Babylon's destroyers. How they made themselves masters of it, is narrated by ancient historians. Cyrus, diverting the Euphrates, which ran through the midst of the city, and leading his army into it on a festive night, and the consternation of its surprised king and courtiers, seem to be pointed to in ver. 30, 38, 43.

All that is prophesied here of Babylon's utter ruin, so that, although then the wonder of the world for splendour, magnitude, and strength, she should become the rendezvous of ravenous wild beasts, is verified by all modern travellers, who speak of the place which she occupied as a waste howling wilderness, and of her ruins as leaving no trace of her ancient greatness.

PRAYER.

Lord thou hast been the dwelling-place of thy people in all generations, and thou hast ever shown that thou dost cause all things to work together for their good. Even when they did grievously provoke thee to anger, when they did break thy law, and disregard their covenant with thee; when they went after other gods, and did worship the dumb idols of the heathen nations; and when for all this thou didst, according to thy threatening, give them up to the sword of the enemy, and didst bring upon them the chains of the captive in a foreign land; yet,

even there, thy pity did find them, and thy promises of reconciliation were renewed and fulfilled unto them. Thou didst still place thyself before them as their refuge and their strength, and thy voice of compassion unto them was still, Turn to the strong hold ye prisoners of hope; behold, I will render double unto you. Thou didst indeed show them that their Redeemer was strong, and that he was Lord of hosts, giving the conquest to whomsoever he would. For when the time to favour thy Zion was come, and when her children did turn their faces with contrition of heart towards thee, then didst thou take up the mighty nations, and the strongly fenced cities in which they did in captivity groan, and as a potter breaketh a vessel, so didst thou dash these nations in pieces, and set thy people free. Almighty God, we do trust, that we are part of thy heritage, that we are also of the commonwealth of Israel, and partakers of the promises made unto her. Thou hast still a Zion, and he who came in the likeness of our flesh, mighty to save, is still her king. O we do trust, that by his blood, we, notwithstanding all our backslidings and grievous provocations, may still return unto thee our God, and that we shall, through thy grace, be kept in covenant relation with thee. Alas! how often have we professed to seek thee with weeping and lamentation! How often have we, at thine altar, vowed that we did join ourselves unto thee in a covenant never again to be forgotten! And yet for all these solemn transactions with thee in our heart, and by the symbols of the blood of the new covenant, have we again gone after the idols, and the sins, and the vanities that we did renounce, and shown unto the world, thine enemy, that we pay not what we vow unto thee the living God. We beseech thee, heavenly Father! not to cast us off, because of these our iniquities. We beseech thee, for thine own name's sake, to make us more steadfast unto our solemn engagements. We beseech thee, by thy Spirit, to unite us more closely unto our covenant Head; and to enable us with more constancy to follow him Zion-ward. May we be refreshed in our pilgrimage thither, by all the means of thy grace. May we be enabled to go on from strength to strength, till we all arrive in the new Jerusalem. May all enemies, temporal and spiritual, be confounded, that seek our halting; and may we this day encourage one another in the paths of righteousness. We thank thee for the mercies of the past night, for its refreshment of the body, and for its meditations to the soul in communion with thee. Lord, be with all thy

people as they go forth to the work thou hast given them to do. Enable us to do all things for thy glory. And may thy blessing rest upon this household, according as thou hast promised in Christ Jesus. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—I TIMOTHY II.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Bearing in mind the opposition from the unconverted Jews, and even from many Judaizing Christians, to the universal offer of salvation by the gospel, we shall have a key to the right interpretation of one or two passages in the first half of this chapter; First, it is asked, Are we to give thanks for all men, most of whom are grossly wicked? No; but only in as far as God maketh them the instruments of doing good, as is evident from the last clause of ver. 2. But the apostle may signify that it was the duty of those Jews who would confine the benefits of Christ's redemption to the seed of Abraham, to give thanks to God for all the Gentiles that were made partakers of them; and also to thank God, when he disposed the hearts of those in authority, to promote the reception of them among their subjects.

Ver. 4. has been often confidently quoted by the supporters of universal redemption. The difficulty of explanation lies in this: It is a fact that all are not saved; yet it is here stated God wills all to be saved; and therefore, the Almighty comes short in executing his purpose of universal salvation. The general way of removing the difficulty, is by making a distinction between the secret and the revealed will of God. The Lord knoweth them that are his, but he hath not made them individually known to the preachers of the gospel. His revealed will to them is, that they teach it unto all nations as if he willed all to be saved; not to the Jews only, but to the barbarian, Scythian, the bond, and free. The passage evidently is intended to combat the uncharitable doctrine of confining salvation to the descendants of Israel only, and it meaneth much the same as the declaration of our Lord, 'that many shall come from the east, and from the west, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven;' that is, some of all kindreds and tongues shall be brought to a knowledge and belief of the gospel, and be saved by that gospel. These remarks are equally applicable to the explanation of ver. 6. where *all* must be understood as meaning some of all sorts of men. The apostle enforces the duty of the Jews to work the salvation of the Gentiles, by the argument of there being but one God and one Mediator. This verse is best illustrated by Rom. ix. x. xi. and the second chapter of the Ephesians, where it is shown, that not only was peace made between God and his elect from among Jews and Gentiles, by Christ Jesus, but that in him

also were Jew and Gentile reconciled. By his finished work all the legal partitions were taken away; and therefore, it behoved the Jews to look upon the Gentiles as now made fellow-heirs with them of the heavenly inheritance. And this was just the reason why the apostle was compassing sea and land, and instructing them in their high privileges as fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God. ver. 7.

God had a controversy with man because of his iniquities, and man had an enmity towards God because of the holiness and justice of God, and the corruption of man's own nature. To reconcile God and man, thus at variance, constituted Christ's mediatorial office. And that he might be fitted for this mighty work, it behoved him to unite the human nature to the divine. When speaking of him as Mediator, sometimes the scriptures point to his divine nature only, and sometimes to his human nature, as the apostle does here; and the apostle does so here, as an argument why Jew and Gentile should strive together for the faith of the gospel, since the author of it took upon him their common nature.

The last verses give the reason why females, as being the weaker vessels, should not be admitted as office-bearers in the church, since the first woman discovered, in giving way to satan, that they are not by nature so well calculated to repel the assaults that may be made upon them as the men are. Yet though, in consequence of the fall, woman became the more disabled for discharging such duties, and although, in one of her most honourable functions, a severe memorial of her conduct in that sad catastrophe remains, salvation, through the merits of Christ, is not the less hers, if, by faith, she apprehend it, and lead a life in conformity with its glorious prospects.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou hast made of one blood all the nations of the earth. We bless thee, that in the fulness of the time thou didst send thy Son, and didst give unto him a body of the seed of Abraham, which he offered up a sacrifice once for all, that he might bring in an everlasting righteousness, which should be unto and upon all them that believe. We thank thee, that when our first parents did give heed to the voice of the great deceiver of mankind; when they did ruin themselves and their posterity by breaking covenant with thee; when they had brought sin, disease, suffering, and death upon their soul and body by their own wilful transgressions; and when there was no hand to help and no eye to pity, when thy justice was turned against man, and man's heart turned against thee, thou didst send forth the eternal Son of thy love, made of a woman, made under the law, that through the offering of his sinless flesh he might overcome sin in our flesh; that through the shedding of his precious blood he might satisfy thy law and thy justice, and thus recon-

cile us unto thee. We bless thee that thou art pressing the acceptance of this salvation, wrought out by Jesus Christ as our Mediator, upon the very chief of sinners; and that the voice of thy gospel is, O every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, without money, and without price. We would obey this voice, gracious God! and we would come to this fountain thou hast opened up for sin and for uncleanness; and guilty and polluted as we are, poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked as we must acknowledge ourselves to be, we would believe that we shall be accepted through thy Beloved. We beseech thee to enable us to pass through the polluting and ensnaring things of time, as becometh those who are sensible that they have upon them the spotless robe of their Redeemer's righteousness. May the men who are given still to the pomps and vanities of this life, take knowledge of us that we are the self-denying followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. O Lord, we thank thee that thou hast again brought us so near to another sabbath of gospel ordinances. If spared by thee to the coming hallowed morn, grant that its sun may not only rise in peace upon us, but that the Sun of righteousness may arise with healing on his wings, through the means of all the solemn services of that day. Enable us to put both house and heart in order for the spiritual keeping of thy sabbath. May thy Spirit move to and fro over the families of the earth, so that the time be hastened when all shall know thee from the least unto the greatest. Bless the rulers of our land; dispose their hearts more and more to the welfare of the kingdom of thy Son. Accept of our thanksgivings for the mercies of the day now for ever gone by. Pardon its many sins. We praise thee for whatever good thou hast enabled us to do. Be over this household and all that it contains. O thou keeper of Israel, keep our hearts in communion with thee, as we repose in the slumbers of the night. May our sleep be refreshing, and our meditations profitable and sweet. So that if body and soul are spared together, to arise to more work on this side the grave, that work may be done more unto thy glory, and body and soul be more and more fitted for entering into thy rest, through the blood of Christ. Amen, and Amen.

FORTY-SECOND WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 7—11.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CXIX. 1—24.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Though this psalm has no title either to tell its author or its object, yet, from the sameness of many of its expressions with those of other psalms which are undoubtedly the composition of David, there can be little doubt but that this one too is the breathing of his inspired soul; and the object of it seems to be, to preserve a record of the workings of a heart born of God, and striving to keep in close communion and fellowship with him. There cannot be a more profitable exercise for a soul in its progress Zionward, than to study the joy and the sadness, the strength and the feebleness, the confidence and the doubting, the light and the darkness, the warmth and the deadness, the love and the indifference, the divine manifestations and the fatherly chastisements, of a soul who, there can be no doubt, was intended for a pattern to Zion's pilgrims, and who did itself arrive there with songs of everlasting joy. Such mixed experience of a heaven-born soul, on whom the Spirit of truth was largely shed, we have in this psalm. From the peculiarity of its poetical construction, it looks as if it were intended that a very familiar acquaintance should be made with it; for it has, in the original, all those peculiarities of divisions, and commencements of these divisions with the same alphabetical letter, which are found materially to assist the memory in its recollections. It does not appear to have been all written at the same time, for the tone of the author's spirit varies too much in the course of it to admit of such a supposition; yet there is one uniform attitude of his soul which never varies, that of the most intense meditation over the word of God. There may be shades of difference in his relish for the word; and according to these alterations of his spiritual taste, he may have given it the diversified names of law, and statutes, and testimonies, &c., which so often occur; yet at all times it is to him meat indeed and drink indeed. The first part contains a summary of the whole psalm.

Ver. 1—3. State the true way of attaining to happiness, both in time and in eternity, viz. a life of faith and of holiness in strict conformity with God's law. And lest some should fancy, as many, alas! do, that they are pursuing this way to blessedness, when they are only following the deceitfulness of their own deceived hearts, certain marks of character are given by which their path may be tried. All that is stated of them that are truly blessed, as to their holiness and spiritual ability, is to be understood either as that standard of perfection which God has still a right, in virtue of man's original accountability and purity, to demand; and such as man, had he continued innocent, would have come up to; or it is rather to be accounted as that standard to which every Christian is in all sincerity to aim, and as that light in which God views the regenerated soul who

is walking in Christ Jesus. They daily, indeed, commit sin, but it is their earnest endeavour not to do so; and it is the grief of their heart if they do. And God is pleased to look upon such in the face of his Anointed, and to regard them in him as without iniquity.

In ver. 5. the psalmist feels his own inability to comply with the just demand in ver. 4. to the extent he desired. He knew that one great end of bringing the high exactments of God's holy law in full force upon the sinner, was just to make him feel his helpless condition for obeying it; and to make him betake himself to that Spirit which is promised to be put within the people of God, and to cause them to walk in his statutes; and this is just what the psalmist does. He felt that 'it was not in himself to direct his own steps,' but God had promised to be his leader and his guide, and he, accordingly, prays for the fulfilment of that promise.

Ver. 9. Well acquainted with the proneness of youth to mistake the road to true happiness, and aware how they feel towards the path of life, as being an irksome and a gloomy bondage; and knowing how recklessly they break through all restraints, and what sad lengths they go in licentiousness, pleading all the while the violence and the waywardness of their natural passions, as an excuse for their profligacy, and that it is impossible to do otherwise; he assures them, would they only, in good earnest, try to frame their ways by the word of God, that a power from on high would bring that word upon their hearts in such a quickening manner as to produce a spirit of new life, and to root out or destroy the old corrupt desires of the flesh and of the mind. Then he gives his own plan of using the word of God, so as that it may produce this blessed effect; not perusing it superficially, but hiding it in his very heart; not trusting to the powers of his own mind properly to comprehend it, but wrestling at the throne of grace for the Spirit to guide him unto all truth. And lest the young, who are so apt to think that supreme happiness can be got only out of great wealth, should still think that such study of divine things, could not be equal in pleasure to the former kind of enjoyments; he asserts that he found it so, that it gave him more joy than all his wealth and honours as king of Israel.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

While we feel and acknowledge the just demands of God's holy law, and believe that these have been fully satisfied by the merits of a Redeemer, let us also feel that his magnifying the law in our room and stead, thus taking away its curse from us, has bound us more than ever to pursue the paths of righteousness which that law still enjoins. If the blood of Christ presents us in the eye of God's law as having no iniquity, it redeemed us from all iniquity that it might also purify us and make us a peculiar people unto God, zealous of good works. Let us ever bear in mind, that true happiness and holiness can never be separated. And that our ways may be more and more cleansed, let us apply ourselves earnestly to that word through which the people of God are sanctified. And while we incul-

cate the necessity of its study upon the young, we ought to take care, that we be able to enforce our admonitions by an exhibition of its power upon our own hearts in restraining us from every false and evil way, and in setting us above the fleeting vanities that they run so madly after. And may our endeavours, both with them and ourselves, be ever quickened by an abiding recollection of the awful declaration, 'that without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises; angels and archangels stand around thy throne, and they cry, day and night, Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts; yea, such a sense have they of thy holiness, and such shame of their unworthiness to be in thy presence, that they veil their faces with their wings. And thou dost indeed charge them, pure and spotless as they are, with folly. Ah, Lord, what manner of creatures must we be in thy sight? we who have been conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity; we who have committed transgression in its most aggravating stains when we ran in the heedless paths of youth, when we would give ear to no admonition, when we despised all reproof, when we sought our happiness in the sinful pleasure of a world that lieth in wickedness, and when we felt towards thy word, and thy worship, and service, as a grievous yoke that we would never bear. How thankful ought we to be that thou hast thus spared us during our rebellious and ungrateful course. And if now, O Lord, thou hast brought any of us to bemoan the sins of our youth; if thou hast pierced our heart by the sword of thy Spirit, and if, by the power of thy Spirit, we have been turned into the way of the statutes, Lord, we beseech thee to uphold our goings, and never take thy free Spirit from us. And if there be any now before thee who are still left to the imaginations of their own heart, and to the leadings of satan in the search of their happiness, Lord, be pleased to quicken them according to thy word; create in them a clean heart, and renew in them a right spirit; bring them also to the cross of Jesus, and while, through faith, thou purgest away all their sin, by his blood, from the book of thy remembrance, so that thou seest no iniquity in them finally to condemn them, do thou also enable them to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and to dedicate themselves unto thee a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in thy sight. We rejoice that salvation dependeth not upon our own merits; but yet we do know that blessed only is the man who striveth to purify himself even as Christ is

pure; because thou hast assured us, that without such purity, thy blessedness cannot be enjoyed. Evermore then, heavenly Father, fit us by all the means of thy grace for being received into thy bosom. We desire to thank thee for the continued supply of these means, for the return of thy sabbath, for the prospect of going up to thy sanctuary, where thou hast promised especially to bless thy people. O may we be able to hide thy word in our heart, so that satan may not be able to catch it away, and that we sin not against thee. Enable us, in using it, to follow the example of the saint whose inspired portion of it we have now read. Enable us to profit by all the sweet experiences of his soul which he has recorded. We would remember all who are detained, by necessary causes, from going up with us to the meeting of thy people. Stand by thy servants who are preparing this day to preach thy gospel. O may their sound go to the uttermost parts of the earth. And may we, as a congregation, and as a family, be among those who are blessed in knowing that joyful sound to the saving of our souls. We would again thank thee, in a family capacity, for the mercies of the past night. Lord, grant that we all meet again in the evening at thy throne, with acceptance through Christ. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXV. 8—14.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CXIX. 25—32.

REMARKS.

This third part begins with prayer for the light of God's countenance, for the psalmist seems now to be in trouble. The frequent repetition of the same petitions in this psalm, marks his great sense of his entire dependence upon God; moreover, the threatening calamities prompted such a mode of prayer. The language of this part is similar to that which David uses in other psalms when his life was threatened by Saul, and when he was fleeing from him, and wandering a stranger among the Philistines. Yet, under all circumstances, his support was a firm grasp of the promises of God; and his consolation, an assurance of his favour. The more he studied his word, the more he saw in it to excite his wonder at God's redeeming love, and his providences towards himself. Men, until the eye of their understanding is enlightened by the Spirit of God, can see nothing remarkable in his word; yea, it is unto them as an unintelligible and a wearisome tale. The natural man perceiveth not the things of God, they are foolishness unto him; but when the Spirit cometh with demonstration and with power upon his heart, they then become unto him the wisdom of God and

the power of God. A boundless field of wonders then open up to his view, which he finds it will require eternity to explore. Nothing does a child of God dread more, than being left to his own light and to his own will, and in the time of trouble, to the natural propensity of his flesh. The only guard, then, against self-deception, is a most prayerful and rigid inquiry after what is the scriptural path of duty. And it is the blessedness of such a searching, that it is the best means of fortifying as well as of directing the mind in the day of trouble. If we are thus more earnest in trying to find out what God would have us to do while beset on every side, than in trying to avenge our wrongs, God will, in due time, rebuke those who oppress us, and set us free from their persecution. Instead of meditating railing for railing, let us meditate, like the psalmist, upon the promises of the gospel, while men sit and speak against us. It is no sign of a heart and a conduct being right with God, when all men speak well of us. All that live godly will, in some way, suffer persecution; but if we are so tried, let us rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for him, who endured the contradiction of sinners in our stead.

Ver. 28. The fourth part presents us with a view of the psalmist's mind in a very desponding attitude. It was sore pressed, and is now wrestling in the very dust, as if ready to give up the contest; still it is not in despair, because it is not trusting to its own strength, but cleaving to the Rock that is higher than itself. It is still in the attitude of assured prayer. And often when a soul in such a frame thinks it cannot become lower, it is then most strong—strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. And we see from the wrestling of the psalmist here, that however low we may be lying, pressed down by a sense of aggravated backsliding or unbelief, still it is by cleaving to the promises of pardon and reconciliation through our merciful and gracious High Priest, that we are set up again. As the psalmist again and again had besought the Lord, that he might be quickened and raised up, and prepared for running the way of all his commandments, so in the last verse he repeats this holy determination, when God should 'enlarge his heart;' that is, when he should set him free from the spirit of bondage and of fear, by granting him an assurance of his love, and an abiding sense of pardon and of peace, so as to make his heart swell with love and gratitude, and fill his mouth with praise. Let us never be at ease, while our hearts are content with little sensibility of having the love of God shed abroad in them, and with a small degree of willingness and strength to run the way of his commandments.

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, thou hast never said unto any of the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. Believing that we are part of thy heritage, unto whom thou hast given many great and precious promises, would we approach thy throne of grace in the name of thine only and well-beloved Son, in whom thou hast promised to bless thy chosen ones with all spiritual blessings.

We rejoice that we have free access unto thee with all our sins, by his peace-speaking blood; and that this blood may be sprinkled the more abundantly upon us, do we confess our manifold transgressions. Lord, thou hast promised, that though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; although they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool. We would feel them thus aggravated in thy sight. And, O how must they appear before thee, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity at all. Well, indeed, may our souls cleave unto the dust in thy presence, and melt for heaviness, when we think of what we have done against thee. Thy law is holy, just, and good; but we are carnal, sold under sin, and if thou, by thy grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, hast redeemed any one of us, we would ascribe the glory to thy free and unmerited favour. Behold what manner of love, that such sinful rebels should be called thy sons; that we should have such endearing names bestowed upon us, and that we should have such high privileges assured unto us. O that thy Spirit, in opposition to the deep feeling of our unworthiness, would bear more clear evidence in our hearts that we are indeed thine adopted children, and joint heirs with thy Son. Be thou pleased to make our faith in all the promises of our adoption more strong, so that our hearts may become more enlarged towards thee. Shed abroad thy love in them, that they may be filled with gratitude unto thee the God of all their comfort, and the Father of all their mercies. We mourn over their natural deadness, their forgetfulness of thy tender compassions; yea, and their wilful backslidings from thee. Justly mightest thou have cast us off from thy free favour, and let us alone to reap the fruit of our own doings. O we do trust that thou wilt never thus leave us, that thou wilt never utterly forsake us. And we do hope that we may take all the warnings and pleadings in the preaching of thy gospel this day, as a token that we are not yet beyond the day of grace and merciful visitation. May the word that was spoken be sealed upon our souls, so as to seal them under thy Spirit against the day of redemption. Grant that we give evidence in the rest of our weary pilgrimage, that we and all thine Israel have this day received refreshing from on high. Open, we beseech thee, our eyes, that we may see more and more of the wonders of thy law, that we adore more and more the wonders of thy redeeming love. O surely great is the mystery and the wonder of God being manifested in the flesh. As thine angels delight to look into these things, O may we, who are the

objects of this wonderful work of redemption, delight to consider it by day and night. We beseech thee to bless all those for whom thou wouldst have us to pray. Our friends and our relations do thou preserve; and as we can ask for no better thing unto them, than that thou wouldst open their eyes to the things that belong to their everlasting peace, Lord, grant us to see them seeking, with all earnestness, the way of life. Enable us to forgive all those who sit and speak against us; while we endure their hatred and scorn, enable us to meditate on the example of him, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. Lord, turn the hearts of the persecutors of thy people and of thy cause. And whereas we fear that many have this day profaned thy sabbath, and turned it into a day of sinful recreation, we beseech thee to make them, before it return again, more alive to their own best interests and to thy wrath. Refresh the spirits of all that have spent themselves either in teaching or in preaching thy gospel. Especially do thou encourage the heart of him who has the spiritual oversight of our souls. Enable us, in the silent watches of the night, to turn our thoughts back to the exercises of the past day. Alas! Lord, for our little profiting with all, for our deadness and formality, for our wandering of thought and worldly-mindedness. Pardon these sins mixed with our solemn duties. And we again entreat thee to hear the prayers of the closet, of the family, and of the sanctuary, through the merits and mediation of him whom thou hearest always, even him who is exalted at thy right hand, our Prince and our Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Lord our Righteousness. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXVII.

SCRIPTURE—JEREMIAH LI.

REMARKS.

The prophet here goes on with those denunciations against Babylon, and those predictions of her final overthrow, on which he had entered in the preceding chapter. He had, on some previous occasions, been suspected of falling away to the Chaldeans, because of his testifying against the sins of his own nation; and declaring God's purpose of employing the king of Babylon as the instrument of punishing the iniquity of Judah.

The prophet was thus looked upon with an evil eye by his own people, as if he were disaffected to them, and friendly to their enemies, and a prophet of evil only against the land of his nativity. But in the tremendous plagues which he now announces,

as destined to be inflicted on the cruel oppressors of Judah, he displays the Divine nature of his message equally to his countrymen by the prophecy itself, or to those in after ages, by its fulfilment. In Jeremiah's day there was no prospect of Babylon's desolation, whatever signs there might be of the approaching captivity of Judah. And yet it is with an equal minuteness of detail, and undoubted certainty of the result, he declares that the former as well as the latter event should take place.

Babylon is now what the inspired prophet declared it should be. His very words have been literally and remarkably fulfilled. Modern travellers of every variety of opinion, unite in bearing testimony to the complete fulfilment of Jeremiah's prediction. They all unite in showing, that no words could describe the present state of that once famous city, or the feelings of those who witness its signal desolation, like the language of Jeremiah, ver. 37, 43.

But we must be chargeable with error, not knowing the scriptures or the power of God, if we confine the fulfilment of this prophecy to the destruction of the literal Babylon. There is a mystical or spiritual Babylon, the destruction of which is the main subject of the predictions contained in the book of Revelation. The language employed by the inspired writer of that book, completely harmonizes with the very words in which the prophet Jeremiah pronounces the doom of that Babylon which was the enemy of God's ancient people. Whoever compares this chapter of Jeremiah with the first of Revelation, cannot fail to be struck with the coincidence.

As the Spirit of God moved both Jeremiah and John to write the words of their prophecies, it is evidently not without design that this great similarity of language as well as of sentiment, pervades their denunciations against the spiritual Babylon, whose doom they foretold. In the first instance, it was the literal Babylon, whose destruction Jeremiah was commissioned to predict. But yet, as Israel of old foreshadowed those that are the true Israel, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, 'and have no confidence in the flesh'; so the Babylon which was of old, prefigured or typified that Babylon that is drunk with the blood of saints and martyrs, and which remains yet to be fully and for ever destroyed.

The spiritual Babylon, that mystery of iniquity, in a concentrated form, is none other than the apostate church of Rome, whose bishop or head has seated himself in the temple of God, and whose merchandise is the souls of men. And as this system of iniquity, amid all the false religions and heresies in the world, has been the masterpiece of Satan's devices against Him who shall bruise Satan under the feet of the saints; so the denunciations of Jeremiah and of John, against Babylon, are truly applicable in a more extended but not less just acceptation to all those who are not the people of God; who are not with Christ, and must therefore be regarded as antichristians.

Wherefore, let all such as follow diverse lusts and pleasures; as believe not God's testimony concerning his Son, and are enemies to the cross of Christ, tremble and be afraid; for as they make war with

the Lamb, so the Lamb shall overcome them, and they shall be banished from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, for ever and ever.

PRAYER.

O Lord, who can stand in thy sight, when thou arisest to judgment! Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Evil cannot dwell with thee, the Lord; neither can fools stand in thy sight. Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity. We lament, before thee, O God, that through the entrance and influence of sin, the earth is filled with violence, and the hearts of the children of men are fully set in them to do evil. From the very beginning, one generation hath risen up after another, to renew the deeds of their fathers, and to realize the sufferings and sorrows that are inseparable from the commission of sin. We desire, O Lord, to mourn over the corruption of our nature, and the sinfulness of our race. We lament, that even in the early ages of the world, all flesh had corrupted its way, and it repented the Lord that he had made man; and in his righteous judgment he sent the flood to destroy the world of the ungodly. But alas! O God, how soon did iniquity again lift up its head. How speedily did the children of men take counsel together, to plot against the Lord and his Anointed; that they might oppose his cause, and oppress his people. Blessed be thy name, O Lord, that thou didst remember thy covenant, and broughtest salvation to thy chosen; and didst take vengeance on thine adversaries. Thou didst, O God, smite great nations, and slay mighty kings. The sins of Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, and the beauty of the Chaldeans' excellency, came up in remembrance before thee; and thou didst visit her with a fearful overthrow, and swept her away as with the besom of destruction. O righteous Father, do thou remember the word that thou hast spoken respecting the spiritual Babylon, the mystery of iniquity, the mother of abominations, that has wrought such wickedness in the earth. Grant, we humbly beseech thee, that the time of her visitation may speedily come, when thou wilt avenge upon her the oppressions of thy people, and the blood of those that were slain for the testimony of Jesus; and when she shall be cast as a great millstone into the sea, never to be found any more at all. O Lord, do thou save us from all errors and delusion. Enable us to hold fast the word of life, and to maintain the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end. Blessed be thy name, O God, that on the day that is past we were permitted to enjoy the hallowed rest of the holy sabbath. Follow with thy blessing the spiritual services in which we were engaged. May saving

impressions of divine things abide with us, and exercise their proper influence on our conduct. Give us grace, we humbly beseech thee, that in entering on the work of the six days that are given us for our employments, we may be enabled continually to set thee before us, that thou mayest direct our goings, that every pursuit may be conducted in thy fear, and every work be done to thy glory. May our whole life here below, be a walking with God. Through the grace of thy Spirit may we grow up in a meetness for the heavenly inheritance, that an abundant entrance may be administered unto us into thine everlasting kingdom. These, and all other blessings needful for us, we implore in the name, and for the sake, of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXII. 13—18.

SCRIPTURE—I TIMOTHY III.

REMARKS.

In this chapter the apostle instructs Timothy respecting the duties and qualifications of the office-bearers in the Christian church. As he makes mention only of bishops and deacons, we may conclude that these two orders constituted the chief ecclesiastical functionaries. The presbyter, or elder, not being distinguished from the bishop, shows that the two terms are convertible, or descriptive of the same office. The certainty of this is evident from the address of Paul to the elders of the church at Ephesus, as recorded in the 20th chapter of Acts: 'Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, or bishops.' He writes in a similar strain to Titus, chap. i. 5.: 'For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly;' and then adds, 'for a bishop must be blameless;' thus proving it beyond all doubt, that by the terms bishop and elder he meant one and the same office. The apostle Peter, also, in his first epistle, chap. v., teaches the same doctrine, and uses similar language: 'The elders which are among you I exhort'—'feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof,' or discharging the office of bishop towards it. From these and other passages in the New Testament it may be concluded, that the terms presbyter and bishop refer to the same office. They err, then, who distinguish them from each other, and thereby cause divisions and dissensions in the church of Christ.

The character of the deacon's office, and the duties that belong to it, are described in Acts vi. From these we see that the great Head of the church has made provision for the temporal necessities of his

people, as well as for the supply of their spiritual wants; and that while he 'gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,' he has also appointed deacons, or servants, to minister to the temporal wants of the poor of his flock.

From this account we may learn, that no Christian church is to be considered as complete in which these two offices are not recognized, and the duties of them faithfully attended to; and that, although they be not of equal importance, yet they severally contribute to the good order and prosperity of the church, as well as to the comfort and edification of individual believers.

The things here set forth are calculated to teach profitable lessons both to the office-bearers in the church, and also to the people. To the former they show the importance and sacredness of the offices with which they are invested, and that personal piety, practical godliness, and grace, for the glory of God, are necessary to the faithful discharge of the duties connected with them; and they require of the latter to obey those that have the rule over them, and submit themselves, to esteem them very highly for their works' sake, and to regard their ministrations as channels for conveying to their souls streams of blessings from 'the fullness of him that filleth all in all.'

PRAYER.

O thou who art the God of grace and of mercy, do thou incline thine ear to hear the voice of our supplications. We ever adore thee as the Father of lights and of life, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. We would acknowledge our entire dependence upon thee, both for the life that now is, and that which is to come. Thy mercies are new to us every morning, and thy faithfulness every night. Thou art crowning us with loving-kindness and tender mercies. O that there were in us such a heart as that we would love thy name, revere thine authority, and obey thy holy will. Do thou, O God, cleanse us from our pollutions and idols; do thou blot out our manifold transgressions for thine own name's sake; and grant that we may be washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. We rejoice, O Lord, that in every age and generation thou hast had a seed to serve thee, who were fed and nourished through the ministrations of thy word and the grace of thy Spirit, and were enabled to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour by a life and conversation becoming the gospel. O grant, we humbly pray thee, that there may be many such in our day. May the ministers of the word, and all who bear rule in thy church, obtain mercy to be faithful. May they be instant in season, out of

season, willing to spend and be spent in the service of their Lord and Master. And do thou, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, bear testimony to the word of thy grace, that it may become effectual for the conversion of sinners, and for building up thy people in their most holy faith. Do thou clothe thy priests with salvation, that thy saints may shout aloud for joy. We would desire, O Lord, at the close of this day, to acknowledge thy goodness towards us during the course of it. Blessed be the Lord who hath given us this day our daily bread; who hath compassed us about with his favours as with a shield, and who hath upheld our goings. O God, do thou graciously forgive wherein we have forgotten thee and forsaken thy law; and do thou condescend to accept of all our humble endeavours to honour and obey thee. May the good Lord now meet with us when we are met together in his name, and bless us severally according to our need. May he be pleased to accept of our evening sacrifice. May he extend over us this night the shadow of his wings, and grant us the sleep which he giveth to his beloved, that being refreshed with needful rest, we may awaken to the activities of a new day, and be enabled to glorify God in our bodies and spirits, which are his. These, and all other needful blessings, we pray for in the name of Jesus Christ, our strength and Redeemer. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXX.

SCRIPTURE—LAMENTATIONS I.

REMARKS.

When we consider the subject and strain of this book, we must acknowledge the propriety of the name given to it by the Jews when they call it *Kinnoth*—tears. It is the plaintive utterance of one whose 'head was as waters, and his eyes as fountains of tears,' and who wept day and night for the sins and sufferings of the daughters of his people.

Jeremiah had been moved by the Holy Ghost to prophecy concerning Judah and Jerusalem; to proclaim the indignation of Jehovah against his own people, on account of their heinous and highly aggravated transgressions; and to predict the fearful judgments with which they should be visited if they did not repent and turn unto the Lord. It was appointed unto him not only to denounce these calamities, but to witness and record their accomplishment. His eyes beheld the desolations of Israel; and although he was himself personally exempted from these inflictions, yet he tenderly sympathized with the misery of his people, and poured out the sorrows

of his heart in the pathetic strains of this most affecting composition.

The contents of this chapter are sufficient to show that it was not without reason the prophet was so grieved and afflicted. Under the notion of a city, Jeremiah here speaks of the Jewish state. Although his language and illustrations are unusually strong, yet he seems as if he could not give full utterance to all that he felt in beholding her desolations. Through the captivity of her king, and the dispersion of her inhabitants, Jerusalem was like a bereaved widow, deprived at once of her husband and children. Her bereavements were manifold, and her afflictions great. Formerly she was full of inhabitants, and her prosperity very great; but now she sat solitary—her tears are on her cheek, and she has none to comfort her. After suffering the utmost extremities of hunger and other privations, she was at last removed from her place, like one turned out of doors, and reduced to the lowest servitude.

Her sufferings were greatly aggravated by the remembrance of former times, when she was eminent for dignity and authority, when many of the surrounding nations owned her sway, courted her alliance, and paid her tribute; but now she is despised and trampled upon, and brought very low. To aggravate still more her sufferings, she found that those who professed friendship and attachment had now become cold in their regards, and disclaimed the connection, and were become her cruel adversaries.

In the desolations of Jerusalem the prophet had to lament the profanation, as well as the interruption, of her solemnities. The heathen entered her sanctuary, they laid hands on her pleasant things, mocked all her sabbaths, and blasphemed the holy name of Jehovah, the Lord of hosts. Well indeed might Jerusalem be grieved under the pressure of such accumulated evils. Well might she say, 'Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.' But the bitterness of her sorrow was greatly aggravated by the consideration that all this was the fruit of sin—that she had brought upon herself these fearful visitations by her undutiful and treacherous conduct towards the Lord her God. While he had separated and sanctified her as a heritage for himself—while he was as a wall of fire around her, and the glory in the midst of her, yet she did not walk worthy of her mercies; she greatly corrupted her ways, and multiplied her transgressions; therefore the Lord became her enemy, and requited her according to his righteous judgments.

It must have afforded the prophet some consolation that the daughters of his people, for whose misery he poured out such bitter lamentations, had some sense of her guilt and unworthiness. She owned the hand of Jehovah in all that had befallen her, justified him in his inflictions, and rested her hopes of deliverance solely on his compassion and mercy. But, alas! this promising appearance was like the morning cloud and early dew, which soon goeth away. Her's was not the godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation. Although she poured out strains of sorrow, yet was she not separated from her sins; and, therefore, he who is of purer eyes than

to behold iniquity sent her far away among the heathen, and gave her up to a grievous captivity.

Let all who read the sorrowful sayings of this book hear, and fear, and return unto the Lord. Let us take warning from the sins and sufferings of Israel, lest we should be entangled in the yoke of bondage, and be banished from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

PRAYER.

O thou who art Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things that are in heaven and in earth, do thou bow down thine ear to hear the voice of our confessions and supplications at this time. We would come before thee with reverence and godly fear. We would sanctify thee, the Lord God, in our heart, and make thee our fear and our dread. Do thou pour out thy Spirit upon us as a Spirit of understanding, and of the fear of the Lord—as a Spirit of faith, and repentance, and holiness—as a Spirit of grace and supplication, that we may, in a suitable manner, sanctify our lives before thee, and exercise the godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, and return unto the Lord, from whom we have deeply revolted. We rejoice, O Lord, that thou art righteous in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works. Thou afflictest not willingly, nor grieveest the children of men. Thou chastenest them not for thine own pleasure, but for their profit, and that they might be partakers of thy holiness. We would therefore cry unto thee, O God, out of the depths of our guilt, and misery, and helplessness. We would adore the wisdom, and forbearance, and mercy, of thy dealings with us. O that the goodness of God may lead us to repentance, and that we may be enabled henceforth to live not unto ourselves, but unto the praise of the glory of thy grace. Heavenly Father, do thou give us grace to improve aright what thou hast made known to us of thy dealings with Israel of old. Thou didst choose them out of all the families of the earth; thou didst set them apart as a heritage for thyself; thou didst bestow upon them many great and precious privileges; but, alas! they were not faithful to thy covenant, nor obedient to thy will. They forsook the God who made them, and did lightly esteem the Rock of their salvation; they provoked thee to anger by their idolatries and evil ways; wherefore thou didst, in thy righteous judgment, scatter them among the nations, and disperse them among the people, and they are, unto this day, a bye-word and a proverb in the earth. O God of their fathers, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, do thou remember mercy in the midst of wrath. Turn them again, Lord

God of hosts, and so they shall be safe. Remove the vail that is over their hearts, and cause them to see the light of the knowledge of thy glory in the face of Jesus Christ. O convince them that Jesus of Nazareth is he who should come, and that they need not look for another; and bring them back from their unbelief and wanderings unto the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Help us, O Lord, to abide in the faith of Christ, and to bring forth the fruits of righteousness to the praise of the glory of thy grace. Keep us, O God, by thy power, through faith unto salvation. And do for us, and in us, exceeding abundantly above all that we are able to ask or think, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIV.

SCRIPTURE—1 TIMOTHY IV.

REMARKS.

The subject of this prophecy evidently is the great apostacy that should be realized in the rise and reign of the papacy. The description is so pointed and precise as not to be gainsayed or mistaken. Accordingly we find, that there is a very general agreement among commentators upon the subject. Indeed the application to the church of Rome is so obvious, as that he who runneth may read it.

The Spirit of God beforehand gave express testimony respecting the coming and character of this apostacy. He was pleased to give warning to the Old Testament church respecting it by the mouth of Daniel, and Jeremiah, and others; and now, when the time of its actual manifestation was drawing near, although not just at hand, there appears to have been given to Paul, and others of his brethren, an immediate revelation concerning this momentous matter.

It would seem, indeed, as if the Spirit, with an audible and articulated voice, had made known these things to his servants, in order to impress them more deeply on their own minds, and that they might be led to give them forth with greater solemnity to others.

This apostacy was to originate in a departure from the faith, from the sound doctrine of the gospel, and the simplicity that is in Christ. It was to be carried on by persons pretending to extraordinary communications from the Spirit of God; but the nature of whose teaching would clearly show that they were the servants of the father of lies, and that their whole conduct bore the character of hypocrisy. And so injurious would the effects of their hypocrisy be, as to render them incapable of discerning the moral distinctions of things; their conscience should become seared as with a hot iron, and God would send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

How remarkably is all this realized in the church of Rome, and in the errors and iniquities by which it is distinguished! The doctrines and practices of magianism respecting demons are adopted and applied to the worship of saints and angels. The restrictions of marriage and of meats are without any authority from the word of God, and lead to practices of the most immoral and pernicious character. The whole system is a remarkable fulfilment of the word of God, and an awful visitation to the inhabitants of the earth.

The apostle inculcates upon Timothy, and upon all other good ministers of Jesus Christ in after times, the duty of putting the brethren in remembrance of these things; to hold up continually before their minds the certainty of the rise and progress of this antichristian delusion, to guard them against its influence, and to stir them up to seek for its complete destruction.

Have not ministers and people, in the present day, much reason to confess that their obligations respecting this matter have been much neglected; and may not this be the reason why the Lord has permitted popery again to lift up its head, and threaten to subjugate the nations? Let all who love the truth as it is in Jesus bestir themselves to resist the adversary; let them take unto themselves the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand in the evil day, and be more than conquerors through him that loved them.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the God of truth, and of grace, and of holiness. Thou dwellest in light that is inaccessible and full of glory. Evil cannot dwell with thee, neither shall fools stand in thy sight. Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity. O blessed be thy name for the revelation which thou hast given us of thy character and will in the scriptures of truth, and that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. Grant, we humbly pray thee, that we may be enabled to receive the truth in the love of it, and that the truth may make us free; that the entrance of thy word may give life and light to our souls; and that, through the effectual operation of thy Spirit, we may become as living epistles of the truth, known and read of all men. O help us to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. May we hold fast the word of life, and cleave closely unto him who is the way, and the truth, and the life, and by whom alone we can come unto the Father. We would tremble and be afraid, O God, when we think of the delusions and iniquities to which we are so liable. How easily are we turned aside from the right path! how readily do we submit our neck to the yoke

of bondage! O do thou arise for our defence deliver us in the hour of danger, and keep us in safety under the shadow of thy wings. Hasten the time when all superstition and idolatry shall be banished from off the face of the earth. O deliver us from the aspirations and encroachments of the man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. O may the Lord speedily consume him with the Spirit of his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming, and may there be nothing to hurt or destroy throughout all God's holy mountain. May the knowledge of the Lord cover the earth as the waters cover the channel of the sea, and all the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. Heavenly Father, be with us now when we retire to rest. Give us the sleep of thy beloved. Pardon our manifold and highly aggravated offences, and speak peace to us through the blood of the cross. And unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, be undivided and eternal glory. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI. 4.

SCRIPTURE—LAMENTATIONS II.

REMARKS.

It forms no part of the design of the gospel, either to deny the existence of suffering under the moral government of God, or to rebuke the tears we shed over our own distresses or the distresses of others. On the contrary, it declares that 'it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of mirth;' and he who wept over the tomb of Lazarus whom he loved, has lent, by his own example, a sanction to the afflicted, in both the feeling and the expression of their sorrow. But while it is neither necessary nor desirable to suppress, in the hour of grief, the feelings of bitter mourning and lamentation which nature prompts, even in those cases where affliction has been immediately appointed as the punishment of our sin, yet it is good always to trace up the affliction to the hand and ordination of God, even when in doing so, we are made to feel that he has sent it in his anger.

The prophet of God laments, in most mournful language, the miseries of Jerusalem, when its walls and palaces were cast down, when the sword and the fire of the enemy had wasted it, when its children had been given up to famine and death, when the Lord had cast off his altar and abhorred his sanctuary, and when the tabernacle of Israel, unto which had pertained the divine presence and glory, was forsaken by its God. But amid the melancholy

catalogue of judgments and calamities which caused the daughter of Zion to clothe herself in sackcloth, and to sit in the dust, it is instructive to remark how affliction is throughout identified with the divine appointment, and the tribulations she suffered acknowledged as the doing of the Lord. In her present misery, the prophet recognised the fulfilment of the divine threatenings on her sins; it was 'the Lord that had covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger,' it was 'his fierce anger' that had put the cup of bitterness into her hand; and in the evil that she felt and feared, she knew that 'the Lord had done that which he had devised, and that he only fulfilled 'his word that he had commanded in the days of old.'

It is only in such a spirit, and with such a direct recognition of God in our distresses, that we can ever enjoy the sanctified use of them. When we thus learn to trace all our afflictions to their cause in the displeasure of God against our sins, or in the discipline of God with a view to our sanctification; when we are taught to connect them with the defects in our own characters, and with the dealings towards us of a righteous and sovereign Judge, it presents us with such a view of our sorrows as is fitted both to humble us and to do us good.

And especially it is under such a feeling, that in seeking deliverance from affliction, we will be led to 'arise and cry out in the night,' and 'to lift up our hands towards God,' as our only hope and help in trouble. It is not wrong to mourn, when God sends us cause for mourning; it is not wrong to weep with those that weep; but it is especially good to trace the hand of God in all our sorrows, and to cause our hearts to cry unto the Lord, who alone can make us 'joyful in the midst of tribulation.'

PRAYER.

O thou who art the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, we desire to humble ourselves before thee this morning, in acknowledgment of thine absolute sovereignty over us, and our entire dependence upon thee. Thou didst make us, and not we ourselves; we are the people of thy hand, and the sheep of thy pasture; thou orderest all the events that befall us here; thou appointest sorrow, and thou givest joy; thou hast set the bounds of our earthly habitation; thou hast numbered the days and years of our mortal existence. Help us to remember that we are altogether in thy hand, and subject to thy disposal; and may we be enabled to look up to thee continually under all the dispensations of thy providence, with a perfect reliance on thy wisdom, thy faithfulness, and thy love. We desire, O Lord, this day to acknowledge our transgressions, and to remember our sins before thee. When we look back upon our past life, and number over our provocations, when we look inward upon our own hearts and discern their corruption, when we look around upon the sinfulness of our own doings, when we look up to him who is of purer

eyes than to behold iniquity, we deeply feel that we cannot enter into judgment with God, or answer him when he contends with us. Once have we spoken, but we will not answer; yea, twice, but we will proceed no further; we had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now our eye seeth thee; wherefore we abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes. Humble our souls, we beseech thee, under a deep and abiding sense of our own sinfulness and demerit; give us the broken and contrite heart that mourns and confesses its corruption; let every proud and self-righteous feeling within us be utterly cast down, and may we be taught to feel and acknowledge that the Lord is just and righteous when he judgeth. Especially, amid the afflictions with which thou art pleased to visit us, may we learn the lesson at once of our own guilt and of thy holiness, and be taught to remember that sin is the bitter cause of sorrow, and that it is our own iniquities that have armed thy providence against us. Help us to acknowledge thy mighty hand and thy truth even in thy sorest chastisements; and knowing that nothing but sin can separate between us and God, may we be stirred up to a holy anxiety to search our own hearts, and try our own ways, and to cast out the accursed thing that hath kindled thy displeasure against us. We bless thy name that there is still mercy with thee, that thou mayest be feared, and plenteous redemption, that thou mayest be sought after. Thou wast a little angry with us, but thou hast turned thee from thine anger and hast comforted us; behold God hath become our salvation, and the Most High our Redeemer. May we find in Jesus Christ that resting-place for our souls which he hath promised to the weary and heavy laden; let our sins be forgiven us for his name's sake; teach us to look up to thee through him as unto a reconciled Father; and abiding continually in him by faith, may we taste of that peace which the world cannot give, and experience of that grace and strength which will fit us for duty and trial. In him is our confidence, let it not be disappointed; may he become to us in growing fullness every day our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and redemption. Unto thee, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend ourselves during this day, and for all the days of our appointed time on earth. Be thou our shield and our guide, our hope and our joy. Watch over all our interests and our footsteps; enrich us with the treasures of thy grace, and keep us by thy power unto thy kingdom. Be very gracious unto all whom we love. Be gracious unto all

who are of the household of faith. Let thy kingdom come, let thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; and hasten on the promised peace and blessedness of a better age. Hear these our supplications, and send us an answer in peace, for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXII. 13.
SCRIPTURE—1 TIMOTHY V.

REMARKS.

The followers of Jesus, whatever be the differences among them in other and less important respects, are closely united to each other, and separated from the rest of men by the profession of the same religious truths, by the worship of the same God, the faith of the same Saviour, the fellowship of the same Spirit, the sprinkling of the same baptism, the communion of the same supper, the observance of the same rites and ordinances. Bound together in this manner among themselves, and disjoined from the world, they form the visible church of Christ upon earth, a society of professedly Christian men, who ought to be separated from others, not more by the peculiarity of the truths which they hold, than by the holiness of the lives which they exhibit. Our Saviour has appointed for that church a certain government, and has authorised certain office-bearers to guard the purity and to provide for the edification of the Christian society; and individual believers are thus taught to consider religion as something more than a private and personal concern, and to feel the obligation of duties owing to each other as members of the same religious body, and united in the communion of the same church.

It is more especially the duty of the office-bearers of the church of Christ, to provide for the purity of its communion, by the exercise of counsel, and admonition, and censure, and rebuke towards those who may have erred; a healing discipline administered with peculiar reference to the circumstances and character of those to whom it is applicable. Those who are advanced in age or in office, are to be censured with something of the tenderness with which one would uncover the sin of a parent; those less advanced in life, are to be dealt with in the spirit of that love which one feels towards brethren. It is only in this manner that a salutary discipline may be preserved from the charge of oppression on the one hand, and laxity on the other, and be instrumental in keeping pure and blameless the body of Christ; and not only in regard to the spiritual censures, but also in regard to the charities of the church, the same righteous strictness is to be observed. The poor and the destitute, and the widow who have none of their own to care for them, are to share in the liberalities of the church of Christ, in proportion as they maintain characters 'void of offence,' and have exhibited lives 'well reported of for good

works;' those supported by the alms presented along with the prayers of the believers on the first day of the week, must be such as 'give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.'

But among all those duties that are owing by Christians to each other in their character as members of the church, not the least important is the reverence and honour due to those appointed to preside over them in the government and instruction of the flock. The ordained servant of the Lord, duly authorised to minister between Christ and Christ's people, is to be esteemed very highly in love for his work's sake; and if need be, those who reap of his spiritual things, are bound to contribute to his necessities of their carnal things. On the other hand, the man who is charged with such a high office and responsibility, must give himself in fear to the discharge of such duties, as done not unto men, but unto God. Being appointed to sit in judgment over the character and conduct of others, it is especially necessary that he do so 'without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality;' 'he must keep himself pure, neither be partaker of other men's sins.' It is by the observance of such rules, and in such a spirit, that the body of Christ may be built up in holiness and honour; by a righteous zeal in admonishing each other of duty, and reproving each other's faults, joined to the tenderness and loving-kindness of brethren, Christians may 'edify one another;' and the 'house of God' will best be advanced in peace and purity when the honour and authority, wherewith Christ has invested the office-bearers of his church, are combined and associated with the freedom wherewith he makes his people free.

PRAYER.

O God, we would now approach thee in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. In him, O Lord, we desire now to be found; and we entreat thee, for his sake, to receive us graciously, and love us freely, to blot out the multitude of our transgressions, to enrich our souls with thy sanctifying grace, to number us with thine adopted and chosen ones, and to visit us with thy great salvation. Teach us more and more our own lost and undone condition as sinners; and under a deep and active feeling of our personal need, may we be led to draw near in faith to him upon whom thou hast laid the burden of our infirmities and guilt, and who, once having died for our sins, hath been exalted to bestow their forgiveness. May we maintain habitually upon our hearts the conviction, that without Christ we can do nothing, and that as the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, so neither can we except we abide in Jesus. Do thou, therefore, teach us every day to cultivate a nearer and more intimate fellowship with him, to abide in him continually by faith, and never to cease our desires and endeavours to increase in an experimental knowledge

of him as our own Saviour and our own God. Crucified with him, may we nevertheless live; and grant that the life which we live in the flesh may be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. We desire to render thanks to thee for all the means of grace and opportunities of spiritual improvement with which we are favoured. Unto us the lines have fallen in pleasant places, yea, we have got a goodly heritage. We bless thee for the word of life, for the light of the gospel which has shone around our dwellings, for our sabbaths and means of grace, for the church of Christ and the ordinances that draw down of his presence and blessing in the midst of us, for the promise of the Spirit to abide with us for ever. May we never forget that to whom much is given, from them much will be required; and may we be stirred up to a more adequate feeling of the value of the privileges we enjoy, and to a greater anxiety for the right improvement of them. Forbid that those means of grace, to which the promise of thy Spirit and blessing are annexed, should be neglected or undervalued by us. But rather may we be found growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and living henceforward as the children of so many mercies. May our souls be nourished and watered from day to day, by the dew of thy grace, and outpouring of thy Spirit; and O may the fruits of the Spirit, in faith and holiness, be made manifest in our habitual walk and conversation. We beseech thee, gracious Father, to be with us during the watches of the night; and may he, in whose eye the darkness and the light are both the same, grant us his presence and protection during our slumbers. Give us to lie down under a confiding sense of thy goodness, and when we awake may our thoughts be still with thee. Bless all who are united to us by the ties of kindred or affection. May they too share in thy blessing. May they and we be safe under the shadow of thy wings; and all that we ask is for Christ our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRaise—PARAPHRASE XXXIX. 1.

SCRIPTURE—LAMENTATIONS III.

REMARKS.

'It is good that a man both hope and wait for the salvation of the Lord.' Such was the persuasion of the prophet, even when suffering with his afflicted countrymen, and mourning over the ruin both of his

home and of his sanctuary. The tribes of God had been sent into captivity; Jerusalem, heretofore 'the joy of the whole earth,' sat widowed and afflicted; and the sanctuary of Jacob was trodden under foot by the idolater and the stranger. Yet Jeremiah was assured that 'the Lord would not cast off for ever;' and that although for a time 'he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.' And therefore it was that he looked forward in faith to the end of the days that were determined upon his people and the holy city. He felt that there was profit to be found in the affliction while it lasted, and advantage to be gained from a state of expectation while the deliverance was deferred; and he confessed that it was 'good that a man both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.'

Such indeed is the attitude which it is both the interest and the duty of the Christian to assume when he is made to 'see affliction, and to bear the rod of divine anger.' In greatness and confidence shall be his strength. Even when 'remembering his affliction and his misery, the wormwood and the gall,' and when almost ready to say in despair, 'My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord,' yet is he conscious that the infliction is less than his iniquities deserve; and under the heavy burden appointed for him to bear, the language of his heart is, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?' 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.' Let a man but ponder the nature and painful extent of the truth that he is a guilty creature in the sight of God, and exposed justly and deservedly to his wrath, and the consciousness of that fact will go far to quench every proud and impatient feeling under affliction, and will teach him, whatever be his sorrows, in silence and patience of spirit to wait and hope for the salvation of the Lord.

The darkest aspects of God's providence, and the sharpest inflictions of his hand, ought never to shake the Christian's faith in his God. It is a precious and sealed truth, that 'he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.' Were there no sin, there would be no suffering, and no need of it under the moral government of God. In its own nature, indeed, and apart from its moral effects, suffering must be utterly repugnant to the character and nature of a God whose delight is in mercy. And it is a truth fraught with strength and comfort to the heart of the afflicted, to think that God employs suffering, in the case of his people, only in such measure, and in such a way, as may be the instrument of advancing their spiritual good; that affliction in his hand is a moral discipline admirably suited to the character and state of those to whom it is applied; and that it is never sent except with the view either of remedying the evil, or of promoting the good, of his children. The moral benefit of affliction has been felt and acknowledged by the people of God in all ages; and the experience of multitudes can bear witness to its blessed efficacy, who have either been at first chosen in the furnace, or have subsequently been purified by its fires. It may be in consequence of sin secretly cherished, or of love and faith waxing cold.

hat God sees reason to contend with his servant ; and then the language that he is taught by affliction is that of Jeremiah, ' Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord ; let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens ; we have transgressed and rebelled ; thou hast not pardoned.' Or it may be that, after hoping and waiting long for deliverance, he has been taught by affliction to render thanks with the same prophet, and to say, ' I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice ; hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. Thou drewest near on the day that I called upon thee : thou saidst, Fear not.'

PRAYER.

Unto whom, O Lord, can we go but unto thee, for it is thine ear that is never heavy that it cannot hear, and it is thine arm that is never shortened that it cannot save ? When our souls are overwhelmed and in perplexity, we would flee unto the rock that is higher than we. We rejoice in the assurance that thou afflictest not willingly, nor grieve the children of men ; and we desire to rest in the promise, that the Lord will not cast off for ever ; that though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. The Lord is our portion, therefore will we hope in him. O give us to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. May he cover us with his feathers, and under his wings may our trust be. Whatever be the trials with which thou art pleased to visit us, may we still be sensible that we are safe in thy hand. In all thy dealings with us, teach us to trace the tokens of Fatherly wisdom and compassion. May we remember that thou contendest with thy people not in anger, but in love. And in the dispensations of thy hand, may we learn to acknowledge that thou afflictest not for thine own pleasure, but for our good. Drawing closer to thee as our reconciled God in Christ Jesus, may we lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees, and rejoice in the assurance that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. We give thee thanks for the assurance, that we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but one who in all our afflictions is afflicted. O may he who once was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, visit us in the season of our sorrow. He knows our frame, he remembers that we are dust. May he be our help, our refuge, and our stay. Teach us, amid all our trials, to look up to that once crucified, but now exalted Saviour, who still well remembers in heaven his own earthly distresses. And satisfied that to him belong infinite power and infinite compassion, and both exercised for the good of his church, may we learn neither to

despise the chastenings of the Lord, nor to faint when we are rebuked of him. Sanctify, we beseech thee, to our spiritual good, all the discipline of thy providence with us. May tribulation work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, even that hope which maketh not ashamed, but which, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entereth in within the veil. Teach us to know more experimentally the unsatisfactory nature of all earthly good ; and let our souls be lifted up to heaven to seek there for a better and more enduring portion. We would now rest our burden upon the Lord. We wait and watch for his salvation. We commit ourselves, and all our interests, into thy faithful hands. Be this day our guide and shield through the wilderness. Save us from danger, save us from sin, and lead us at last to the land of rest. Let all our days on earth be spent in thy fear, and in the enjoyment of thy favour. Let our friends be thy friends ; let them enjoy thy blessing. May they and we together be partakers of thy goodness here, and the heirs of thy kingdom hereafter. Our supplications are before thee. Do thou for us, and in us, more than we can ask or think, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXIII.

SCRIPTURE—1 TIMOTHY VI.

REMARKS.

It is a great mistake to suppose that Christianity is adverse to the inequality of station and ranks which obtains in civil life, or was designed to subvert the relations of human society. If the gospel finds a man in the condition of a servant, it does not dissolve the tie that obliges him to yield obedience to his earthly master, but rather teaches him to render that obedience in such a spirit of faithfulness and devotion, as shall tend to adorn the profession that he makes. Any other doctrine is inconsistent with the love of Christ, and can only be maintained by men who prefer the form to the power of godliness, and who are actuated by a spirit of pride or self-interest. The gospel can sanctify a state of poverty, and make contentment with our own condition to be better than great gain. It will make a man happier with nothing but the bread and water which are necessary for life, than if without the gospel he were rich in all that this world can bestow. They that love and haste to be rich, who set their hearts on a perishing world, and covet its wealth, are laying up for themselves sorrow and bitter disappointment ; for sooner shall a camel pass through the eye of a needle, than a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven.

It is necessary that those who are devoted to God should resist the temptation of such hurtful doctrines and unlawful passions, and strive in faith and patience to secure for themselves a more enduring portion, and to lay hold on eternal life. Private Christians, but more especially ministers of the gospel, ought to remember that coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, which will stamp with the seal of utter vanity the wealth, and the honours, and the distinctions of this world; and, in the hope of his appearing, should be ready to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, having respect unto the recompence of reward.

And if such be the temptations arising from 'uncertain riches,' and such the sorrows of those who make the fine gold their portion, it is peculiarly needful that the wealthy in this world be reminded, by the faithful servants of God, that they ought not to rest in these things as their confidence. The commandment to such is, 'occupy till I come;' and in the faithful use of their riches, as of a talent confided to their trust. In the employment of them for the temporal and spiritual good of their fellow-men, they will find at once their duty and their reward. The fruit of such a use of riches is more precious than gold. It is only in this way that the rich can make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, and 'lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come.'

PRAYER.

Thou art the blessed and the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Thou only hast immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see. Wherewithal shall we come before the Lord, or bow ourselves before the most high God? We bless thee that thou thyself hast shown us that which is good; and that when we had no offering or sacrifice to present for ourselves, thou didst provide the Lamb for the burnt-offering. Do thou be pleased to call to remembrance, on our behalf, the perfect sacrifice and all-sufficient atonement of the Lord our Redeemer; and seeing that he shed his blood, and poured out his life for our redemption, may we receive through faith all those blessings of a spiritual kind which he died to purchase, and is now exalted to bestow. Let not our sins separate betwixt us and thee. Let not our iniquities turn away thy compassion from us. For the sake of thy Beloved, do thou lift upon our souls the light of thy reconciled countenance, and visit us with thy salvation. May we find, in our happy experience, that in Jesus Christ there is plenteous redemption; that with him there is mercy for our souls, and pardon for all our offences. Teach us to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord; and the more we come

to know, with regard to ourselves, that we are poor, and needy, and naked, may we seek the more earnestly to be clothed upon with the righteousness of him who, although he knew no sin, was yet made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. And while seeking to be justified freely through faith in Jesus Christ, we would entreat also that our natures may be renewed and sanctified by his Spirit. May that Spirit work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure towards us. May our hearts become the temples of the Holy Ghost, in which he delights to dwell. And may every impure thought, every worldly passion, every unholy desire, every unlawful feeling, be cast down and rebuked at his presence. As the ransomed people of the Lord, may we continually feel that we are not our own, and that we are bound to glorify him in our bodies and spirits, which are his. Forbid that at any time sin should have the dominion over us. But remembering that holy name by which we are called, and that precious blood which was given to redeem us, may it be our heart's desire and effort to walk through the world as the disciples of Jesus, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by enlightened conversation becoming the gospel. Let us not be conformed to this world in its maxims, its manners, or its feelings; but may we be transformed by the renewing of our minds. And as strangers and pilgrims, who have neither their home nor their portion here, may we be waiting and longing for that second coming of our Lord and Saviour, when he shall appear without sin unto salvation. We desire to unite in thanksgiving to thee for the mercies of the past day; and in the confidence of the same mercy we would now commit our bodies, and spirits, and all that concerns us, to thy keeping for the night. May he who neither slumbers nor sleeps watch over us during its darkness, and let not any plague come nigh our dwelling. Bless those that are dear to us. Be very gracious to thine own heritage. May thy church every where be built up, and thy people multiplied; and very soon may the ends of the earth see the salvation of our God. Hear us, we beseech thee, gracious God, and accept of us, and answer us, for Christ our Saviour's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 31.

SCRIPTURE—LAMENTATIONS IV.

REMARKS.

Every prophet has not lived to see his own predictions fulfilled. Hundreds of years have often elapsed between the prediction of the event and its actual occurrence; but the events which Jeremiah relates in this chapter as an historian, he had foretold elsewhere as a prophet. On turning to the nineteenth chapter of his prophecies, we find him, at the sixth verse, declaring of Jerusalem, 'Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that this place shall be called the valley of slaughter. And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives; and their carcases will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss, because of all the plagues thereof. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons, and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend, in the siege and the straitness wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.' It is a shocking picture which the prophet draws of Jerusalem. Not only was its glory gone, so that the gold had lost its lustre, and those that were once its honoured and honourable men, were now held in no higher estimation than a broken earthen pitcher; but in place of all earthly glory had come desolation, and sufferings of the most horrid and harrowing description. Under the famine, which, while the sword killed without, slew its thousands within the city, the survivors walked about like living skeletons, beauty was turned into blackness, and like the ostrich of the desert, which leaves its eggs to be hatched by the sun, and its young ones to provide for themselves as they best can, the mothers of Jerusalem abandoned their own offspring. They did worse; the mother not only forgot her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the fruit of her womb; the hands of the pitiful women, says the prophet, have sodden their own children, they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people. Well might the prophet envy the fate of Sodom. Its destruction came like a flash of lightning—his people died in pining lingering agony. How true is God to his word! He is not a man that he should lie. We said that this was all predicted by Jeremiah; it was threatened a thousand years before Jeremiah was born. In the twenty-fourth chapter of Deuteronomy we find Moses warning the Jews, that if they did not observe the statutes of the Lord their God, then they would be visited with the very calamities which overwhelmed their city and people in the days of Jeremiah.

Let the wicked take warning. God is as true to his threatenings as he is to his promises. Hell is as sure as heaven. Wrath is approaching. Its steps may be slow, but they are sure; and as long as we

Christians have an ark to flee to, let us enter it before the flood come. We may apply, as many a one does on a death-bed, when it is too late, and the only answer given to the application shall be, 'the door is shut.'

To the ministers, elders, and office-bearers of the church, this chapter addresses a special solemn warning. The prophet tells us that it was especially for the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that Jerusalem was deluged with blood, and burned to ashes, and her survivors borne into captivity. When a land has been blessed with ordinances adequate to the public necessities, a godless and careless people is but the index of a godless and a careless ministry. Such priest, such people. If the priests are clothed with salvation, the people will shout for joy; and hence, while the office-bearers of the church should be alive to their double responsibility, God's people should use all means for securing, and be most fervent in prayer, for a godly, zealous, and faithful ministry; that God would give them pastors after his own heart, and keep them clean who bear the vessels of the sanctuary.

PRAYER.

Thou art, O Lord, a holy and a sin-hating God. Thine eyes are purer than to look on sin, and thou abhorrest the workers of iniquity; and though on him thou dost not always execute judgment speedily, yet thou wilt at length make bare thy holy arm. Thou wilt not be mocked for ever; and before thy terrible wrath the tabernacles of the wicked and the hope of the hypocrite shall perish. Thy judgments have been known upon the earth. This drowned and deluged world, Sodom in ashes, Jerusalem in ruins, thine ancient people this day vagabonds on the earth, a hissing, a bye-word, and a proverb among the nations,—these proclaim thy justice, and that it is indeed a terrible thing to fall into the hands of a living and an angry God. And amid these monuments of ruin, here we stand, not monuments of man's merit, but of God's mercy. Why hast not thy glittering sword been stretched out against us? Why hast not destruction overthrown our cities, and the sword drunk our blood, and the famine devoured our strength, and the pestilence walked in darkness through our habitations? Lord, our sins and our shortcomings bear witness that it is of thy mercy that we have not been consumed, and because thy compassions fail not. Pastors and people, sovereign and subjects, parents and children, all, even all of us, have sinned against thee, and sinned against thee times and ways without number. Our first parents fell, and buried us in their fall; our glory departed; thy image was destroyed; and now, instead of righteousness, clothed us over with iniquity, covered us over with sin. How is the gold become

dim; the most fine gold, how is it changed! May we be warned by thy past judgments on the earth to flee from a more terrible judgment than them all. Hell is coming, and we have deserved it; but yet thou art waiting to be merciful and gracious; and because thou art now restraining thy wrath, wicked men are saying, Where is the promise of his coming? Whatever others say and do, may we listen to the voice from heaven, which says, Escape for thy life; flee from the wrath to come. Blessed be thy name, thou hast provided a refuge, a free refuge, a full refuge, open to all, and large enough for all. Turn us, Lord, turn us by thy mighty power; turn us unto Christ; drive us unto him by the terrors of a coming judgment; draw us unto him by the cords of love. O send forth thy light and thy truth, that we may be guided to this city of refuge, for surely the avenger is behind us, and there may not be an hour to lose. Like thy ancient people, we may be watching for a nation that cannot save us. Trusting to our own righteousness, to our own repentance, to our own characters, to our own merits, we may be thinking to swim the flood in an ark of our own building. If so, open our eyes to this, that these are refuges of lies, and that out of Christ there is no salvation. Wash us in his blood, sanctify us by his Spirit, and so prepare us for that day when thou wilt come to judge the earth, and to take vengeance on all thine enemies. Then may his wing cover us, then in his pavilion may he hide us; and when the angel passes through the land, may the blood of the Lamb of God be seen upon our door-posts. Keep us now through faith unto salvation, and afterwards receive us into glory, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LVII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—2 TIMOTHY I.

REMARKS.

Paul was, in a spiritual sense, Timothy's father. He was his father in God; and hence the apostle addresses this letter to Timothy, 'My dearly beloved son.' And it would be well for parents to remember, that the best wishes they can form for their children are not that they may be crowned with health, and wealth, and worldly prosperity, but that they may get the grace of God, and find that mercy and peace which the apostle asked for Timothy. It is worthy of notice how Paul ascribes to God the glory of all that he or his son possessed. Was he himself

an apostle of Jesus Christ? it was by the will of God; was Timothy distinguished for his faith? he neither took to himself, nor gave to Timothy, the credit of that. Faith is the gift of God, and he gave the glory to him to whom it was due. Though both Timothy's mother and grandmother had been distinguished saints, yet he knew that, though sin was hereditary, grace was not; and that if, as does not always happen, godly parents are blessed with godly children, they are to say, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto our prayers and our teaching, not unto any thing that we have done, not unto any thing naturally good in them, but unto thee be all the glory.

Paul, separated from one whom he ardently longed to see, teaches parents what they should do, and what they can do, when separated from their children. Without ceasing he remembered Timothy in his prayers, and he followed him with his counsel.

As men stir up the coals to make the fire burn brighter; so Paul calls on Timothy to stir up the gift that was given him, when, by the laying on of his hands, he was set apart for the ministry. And it is not only the duty of Christian ministers, but of all Christians, to be stirring at their gifts and graces. Keep the fire of love, and zeal, and devotion, bright. Constant use is the best remedy against rust; and it is with our graces as it is with our limbs, the more they are called into exercise, the stronger they grow. It is true that zeal and devotion to Christ and his cause, lively and decided piety, may expose us to shame and suffering; but we are never to be ashamed of Christ. There is little worth living for but to serve Christ; there is nothing worth glorying in but his cross. If we suffer for Christ, we suffer in a good cause, and suffer in good company; and they alone who carry the cross will wear the crown. The apostle not only exhorts his son to be steadfast in duty, but to be steadfast also in doctrine. When Christians are driven about by every wind of doctrine, and are ready to embrace every novelty in religion, the cause of piety is thereby injured. It gives occasion to the enemies of God to mock and blaspheme, and some appearance of truth to their charge against warm-hearted zeal, that it is all fanaticism. Paul tells us how we are to be kept steadfast, both in faith and practice. We are to be so kept by the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. We are to trust in a higher power than our own. It is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps. How necessary this exhortation was appears from the fact, that in Asia there had been a sad falling away among the Christian converts. Those who had embraced the truth had now abandoned it; those who had once adhered to the apostle, had now deserted him. Paul there found, as many a minister since has found, that the servant is no better than his master. This great apostle was now deserted by multitudes, whose cry was wont to be, 'I am for Paul.' One honourable exception is all he mentions. Onesiphorus was faithful among a faithless multitude. He sought out the apostle in his prison. Paul repaid this kindness with his prayers. And there is a day coming, when Onesiphorus, and all who have shown kindness to his servants, will find, that in so far as they did unto the least of them, they did unto Christ himself. The

widow's mite cast in for their support, the cup of water presented for their refreshment, shall not go without their reward.

PRAYER.

Our Father which art in heaven, thou art the fountain of all our mercies, the God of all our comforts. We thank thee for the health, the bread, the protection, the earthly blessings that we have enjoyed this day. If we have gone out and come in; if we have sat down and risen up in safety and peace; if the outgoings of another morning and another evening have rejoiced over us, this is the Lord's doing; and, considering our many sins and shortcomings, it is marvellous in our eyes. And if there be any good thing in our souls, any grace, any love, any faith, these are thy gifts, O God. By grace it is that thy people are what they are. May we all be made partakers of the grace of God. Give us, as thou gavest to Timothy, a faith unfeigned. If we have had godly parents as he had, we thank thee for it. May the prayers of the parents be answered in the children; and may the young grow up from their mother's knees in the knowledge of the word of that gracious Saviour, who said, Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. May thy sovereign grace, which leaveth one and taketh another, passeth one generation and resteth upon a second, rest and abide on us; and whatever gifts have thereby been bestowed on us or ours, may they be diligently stirred up. May we think much of our sins, that our humility may be deepened. May we think much of our Saviour, that as we muse on the sufferings, and the kindness, and the love of Jesus, the fire may burn within us, our love may grow warmer, and our faith may grow stronger, and we may increase in devotedness to him, who so graciously and generously devoted himself to us. And by thy Holy Spirit, ever dwelling, abiding, and working in us, may we be kept steadfast, amid all our trials and temptations, to the truth and the cause of Christ. Let us not lapse into error, nor fall back into sin. Give us courage to stand by Christ's cause and servants. Keep us, Lord, for we cannot keep ourselves. We commit our way to the Lord, the keeping of body and of soul to him. May thy providence watch over us this night. Thou that givest thy beloved sleep, give us quiet repose; and ever may our last and our first thoughts be of thee. In the blood of Jesus wash away all our sins, thou very God of peace. Sanctify us wholly; and all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 34.

SCRIPTURE—LAMENTATIONS V.

REMARKS.

It is a mark of the ungodly when the hand of affliction presseth them, that they howl upon their beds, but call not on the Lord. God's people, on the contrary, kiss the hand that smiteth them, and on the very God that sendeth the affliction they seek their refuge and their comfort. The prophet in this chapter carries his complaint to the Lord; to the same quarter from whence the calamities had come he looks for deliverance, and, as it were, to move the divine compassion, he relates in the ear of God the sorrows of his suffering people; and seldom has any nation been crushed under such an accumulation of miseries. They were stripped of their property, driven from their homes, reduced to the meanest, most cruel, oppressive bondage; the curse of Canaan was on them, they were the servants of servants. During the progress of the siege, so terrible was the famine, that their skin grew black as an oven; so scarce was the water, that those who had no money to pay for it were left to perish of thirst; they paid money for wood and water, and every morsel that they eat was got at the point of the sword; and these sufferings were but the prelude of still more tremendous evils which followed the taking of the city; then the most shocking and revolting crimes were committed on the defenceless inhabitants; neither sex nor age was spared. Jerusalem was turned into a scene of brutal violence and indiscriminate slaughter, and the horrors that were committed there were repeated in every city of Judah, and the whole land was represented by the prophet's roll, which was written within and without with lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

Of these national calamities the prophet took the proper and profitable view; 'is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?' In these he not only saw the hand of God, but also the guilt and sins of his people. They did not come by chance; they were the righteous retribution for a long course of national backsliding and iniquity. The cup had been filling and filling, until at length, in the days of the prophet, the measure of their iniquity was full. 'Our fathers,' says he, 'have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities.' In the providence of God, we see here how national sins are followed by national judgments, and this should be a warning to our nation and our church to repent, and from all our backslidings to return to the Lord, lest the crown should fall from our head also, and God, in his righteous judgment, should make the mountain of our Zion so desolate, that the foxes shall walk upon it. The language in which the prophet makes confession for his people, may be taken up by every nation, and church, and family, and individual: 'Woe unto us that we have sinned.' Woe is deserved by us, and if woe has not fallen upon us, this is to be ascribed to God's long-suffering patience; and certain it is, that woe will fall on all who shall persevere in a course of sin,

regardless of the cry of heaven, 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?' From every man's head the crown of primeval righteousness has fallen; we sinned and fell in the first Adam, and woe, eternal woe, will be to that man who does not seek, in Christ the second Adam, a refuge from the coming storm. God has, in his own Son, proved a refuge and a restoration; he has not utterly rejected us. In Christ, salvation, mercy, pardon, peace, are offered to the chief of sinners; but if the offer he makes in the gospel of his Son and Spirit is rejected, then he will utterly reject us, and send us away to that place of misery, where neither money nor prayers can procure so much as one drop of water to cool the burning tongue. Let ours then be the prayer of the prophet, 'Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.' We have, in ourselves, neither the power nor the will to turn, but God is greater than our wicked wayward hearts, and can turn them as he turneth the rivers of waters.

PRAAYER.

O Lord, we draw near unto thee, who art a very present help in every time of trouble; remember, O Lord, what is come upon us, consider and behold our reproach. Thou didst at first make man upright, thou didst crown us with glory and honour, but alas! the crown has fallen from our heads; woe unto us that we have sinned. From our high and holy estate we have fallen, and fallen under the power of a worse than Assyrian, of a heavier than Egyptian bondage; we are not only the servants of servants, but we are the bond slaves of satan, the servants of hellish passions; these, by nature, have dominion over us, their bondage is grievous, their wages is death. O that thou wouldst resume thine authority over us, that thou wouldst deliver us from the captivity of sin, that thou wouldst break their sinful fetters, not only proclaiming, but giving liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound. Thanks be to God the proclamation has been made; thanks be to Jesus the ransom is paid; and now when he says, I have set before thee an open door, O give us grace to rise and embrace this offer of salvation. But, Lord, of ourselves we cannot accept of it; we are like a captive with an open door, but fettered and bound to the floor; the love of the world, the lust of sin, pride, unbelief, these bind us, and we pray thee send thy Holy Spirit to break these fetters and set us free. We are bound, and need to be delivered; like Peter, we are asleep in prison, and need to be awakened. He was smitten by the angels and so do thou smite us with convictions of sin, so do thou rouse us to a sense of our danger, open thou our eyes to such a sight, impress our hearts with such a sense of our lost, ruined, and

miserable condition, that we may earnestly seek, and gladly embrace the Saviour. Restore the crown to our heads, restore thine image to our hearts, restore to our souls the joy of thy salvation, and build us up anew from the ruins and desolation of the fall. That we may not be utterly, awfully, eternally rejected, preserve us from rejecting Christ; may we remember that though thou remainest for ever, the day of grace remaineth not for ever, nor the throne of grace for ever; that these shall pass away to usher in a day and a throne of judgment, where our state will be fixed for eternity, and as the tree falleth it shall ever lie. If we have never yet been converted, may we be converted now; let this be the day of our spiritual birth, for we know not but this may be our dying day, the very last opportunity that we shall have of embracing an offered Saviour. Saving, do thou sanctify us; sanctify thy people more and more. May the very God of peace sanctify us wholly. In thy fear do thou this day keep us, with thy mercies do thou this day crown us; thou that hast preserved us in our lying down, preserve us in our going out and coming in, preserve our eyes from tears, our feet from falling, and our souls from death; and bring us all at last in peace to thy heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI. 9.

SCRIPTURE—2 TIMOTHY II.

REMARKS.

It is not enough to be possessed of grace, we need to be strong in grace, that we may attain that constancy and perseverance in the Lord's work to which Paul in this chapter encourages Timothy. The Christian life is represented here under the figure of a warfare, and the Christian himself under the figure of a warrior. There are many encouragements in this warfare. We go not to it on our own charges, we go not to it without sufficient armour; the believer is armed by his Captain from head to heel, and with salvation for his helmet, righteousness for a breast-plate, truth for a girdle, the shield of faith in his left hand, and the sword of the Spirit in his right, he is fit, in the strength of the Lord, to face, fight, and conquer all his spiritual enemies. Yet, aided and armed as he may be, a soldier life is at the best one of hardships, self-denial, and privations; and accordingly the apostle exhorts Timothy, and, in exhorting him, exhorts all to lay his account with these, and, by the grace of God, to endure all the temptations and trials to which he should be exposed as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Careful for the church, the apostle provides for its

instruction. He was himself to fall in the Christian warfare, Timothy might soon be added to the honoured list of martyrs, and to preserve the truth even when such lights were extinguished, such candlesticks removed, Paul instructs his son to rear other teachers, to communicate what he himself had learned to faithful men, that there might thus be a succession and multiplication of Christian ministers. Besides this, the apostle gives his son instructions how to discharge, in his own person, the office of the ministry. He was to discountenance all unprofitable speculations on the doctrines of religion, these often gendering strife, creating divisions, and being after all but a dispute about words, he was rightly to divide the word of truth, giving due prominence to the great doctrines of man's ruin in Adam, his redemption in Jesus, his regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and instead of preaching and working so as to obtain the applause of men, he was to study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. Knowing well that if the fountain was impure, it would spread impurity in its streams, that it was of especial importance that he should be sound in the faith to whom the education of a ministry was entrusted, the apostle warns Timothy against some heresies that were then afloat, and which he characterizes as vain and profane babblings. It would appear that the heretics of these days had even gone the length of denying the resurrection of the dead; and if men will be wise above what is written, and believe nothing but what they can fully explain or understand, there is no doctrine they will not deny. But whatever men in their presumption may doubt, in their daring may deny, the foundation of God standeth sure, the rock of ages cannot be shaken, the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ, the Lord knoweth his own people, and he will never permit their faith to be overthrown. Some had, however, for a while at least, been led astray, and while Timothy was exhorted to set an example of every Christian grace, and so to adorn the doctrine of his Christian profession, the apostle exhorts him to reclaim those who had fallen into sin and error. He was to go into the wilderness after these lost sheep, he was to win them back by patience, gentleness, kindness; these, with the divine blessing, are the means by which the Christian minister, teacher, or parent is to reclaim from error, conquer opposition, and recommend the truth to the hearts of men.

PRAYER.

O Lord, Almighty God, thou fountain of light, and life, and purity, make the light of the glorious gospel of Christ to shine into our hearts. We thank thee for our church, our ordinances, our ministers, and our teachers, and we pray that these fountains may ever be preserved from pollution. With these means of grace, give us that blessing from above without which a Paul might plant, an Apollos might water, and yet there would be no increase. May we not be satisfied with belonging to an orthodox church,

with holding an orthodox creed, seeing that it will profit us nothing to know the truth unless we believe it and obey it. With sound teachers give an effectual blessing; with the teaching of men, give the application of thy Spirit, so that we may be taught savingly and to profit, so that the gospel may not come to us in word only, but in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. May we be brought into a state of grace, and be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; may we not only be kept from error, but delivered from weakness; may we not only be found in Christ's ranks, but enduring hardness and staying sin, and resisting satan, and overcoming the love and the lust of the world, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. As those that have named the name of Christ, may we be enabled to depart from all iniquity; let no sin whatever have dominion over us, let every Achan be cast forth, every root of bitterness removed, and in heart, as well as habit, may we be so purified, that we may be vessels unto honour, sanctified, meet for the Master's use, and prepared for every good work. May the young flee from youthful lusts, and seek the Saviour early; bend thou the tree in the earliest stage of its growth, giving the young heart a direction towards heaven, holiness, and Christ; and whether old or young, may be found following righteousness, faith, charity, and peace; our feet ever treading those ways of wisdom which are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace. Crown our heads with the blessings of grace here, crown them with glory hereafter. May the mercies of the day be followed by rest and protection this night. Preserve us to the light and the duties of another day, and when we lie down at last to sleep in the grave, may the night of death be followed by a glorious morn. May we rise to a gracious and glorious acquittal; then may we be found in Christ; and when our eyes open on a great white throne of judgment, may they open also on a blood-purchased crown of glory; and beseeching thee to hear and answer our prayers for the sake of Jesus Christ thy beloved Son, and our only Saviour, we would ascribe all glory unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, world without end, for ever and ever. Amen.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 49.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CXIX. 49—72.

REMARKS.

Ver. 49—56. It has been supposed by many, that when the psalmist makes mention of 'the word,' that God had spoken to him, he particularly refers to what is recorded in 1 Chron. xvii. 23, which he might regard as embodying the promise, that of him the Messiah was to be sprung, who was to sit on his throne for ever. But there is no need for such a limitation. The substance of the doctrine of salvation had been borne home upon his mind in many other ways, and at different times. He could say with confidence, 'He hath made with me an everlasting covenant;' and he was fully warranted to make this the ground of pleadings with God. Just so can every believer, for Jehovah will ever be mindful of his covenant; and he that trusts in Christ can never be confounded. It is interesting to trace the effects which are here ascribed to the divine word, where-soever it is truly received. It sustains the mind amidst the trials of life; it opens up the fountain of pardon and peace to him who is overwhelmed by conscious guilt; it affords strength to the weak, and quickens the soul by giving new energies and unspeakable joys. When he is exposed to the derision of the proud, the divine word affords to the child of God pure motives to perseverance in the right way. The best of them will be sometimes perplexed when they see the good in affliction, and vice triumphant; and in such case it is only by perusing the record of God's judgment that we can find relief. It is from this book that we learn the evil of sin and its ruinous effects, and thus we are filled with horror at the case of the wicked. By this we are taught so much of God's mercy, and the pleasures of obedience, that the divine statutes become our song, the sources of our highest joy even on earth. The doctrine of this part of the psalm we may consider as reiterated at the 55th verse. It is the remembrance of the divine perfections that renders obedience pleasant.

Ver. 57—64. The psalmist here encourages himself in the right way by the remembrance of what he had already felt and done; and he makes an appeal to God for his sincerity. He had chosen the Lord as his portion, and he had vowed fidelity. He had sought him with the whole heart, he had grieved for sin, and he had proved the genuineness of his repentance by a renewed and ardent obedience, even amidst the insults and injustice of the wicked. And now, in the remembrance of what he had seen of the divine faithfulness and mercy, he purposes to maintain a closer walk with God, and with those who keep his precepts; and, under a feeling of his own weakness, he asks that grace which he knew his all-bountiful Father is willing to bestow. Can we make such appeals to God, and enter into similar vows, as in his immediate presence? Thus only do we prove ourselves his children.

Ver. 65—72. The more closely we examine into the divine dealings with us, the greater encouragement have we to commit our way to the Lord. God has been faithful to his word, and therefore may we ask his teaching. He has often afflicted us; but that has been for our profit. If, then, he has thus followed us with goodness, we may well ask for that teaching, in the bestowing of which we are assured he is glorified. And if we are thus called on, from day to day, to sing of his mercies, how well does it become us to resolve that no devices of the wicked shall ever divert us from our holy purposes, and that all their prosperity shall never induce us to seek our happiness from any other source than the service of God. Happy are we if we have learned, even in the school of affliction, that God's law is better than thousands of gold and silver.

PRAYER.

Most blessed Lord, we praise thee for all the manifestations of thy character in thy works and thy ways; but especially on this day of rest, sacred to the remembrance of a once crucified, but now risen Saviour, we would extol thee for that covenant of grace, in the old time the refuge and hope of believing men, and which is now sealed by the blood of Christ. We praise thee for the full and free overtures of mercy which are addressed to us through the divine Redeemer; for all the benefits that are treasured in him; for the encouragement that his doctrine affords us to perseverance in a holy obedience, and to the cultivation of a close intercourse with thee our Father in heaven, and for the comfort it yields us amidst every trial of life, and the slanders and reproaches of the ungodly. Grant that we may never be moved away from the hope that is in Christ: that through the blood of the covenant alone we may ever look for pardon, and all needed spiritual blessings; that by faith in this we may learn from this day to eschew those ways that are evil, and to esteem thy law as better than thousands of gold or silver: thus may we become companions of all them that fear thee. And may the holy book, that records the things that belong to our peace, ever be prized by us as the charter of our privileges, the storehouse of our treasures. May we learn to make it the man of our counsel, the frequent companion of our solitude, our guide in seasons of difficulty, our refuge in danger, our comfort in affliction. Lord God of the sabbath, vouchsafe to us thy presence and countenance on this day, which thou hast specially made for thyself. Quicken our hearts, and enliven our affections for all the devotional exercises, both public and private, to which we are now invited. Let this prove truly a season of rest and refreshment to each one of us. Be with us when we enter thy house; or if thy pre-

nce go not with us, carry us not up thither. Remember thy word of promise unto thy servants, that where two or three are met together thy name, thou wilt be in the midst of them. Give testimony to the word of thy grace whenever and by whomsoever it may be proclaimed is day, so that many who have hitherto been living at a distance from thee, may now choose thee as their portion, and may, with deep repentance, entreat thy favour with the whole heart, and that thy people may, with grateful hearts, anew take encouragement in thy service. Lay the sick and sorrowful, who cannot enter thy house, know that thou art with them, and in the issue learn thy statutes from their affliction. All these things we beg for Christ's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 73.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CXIX. 73—96.

REMARKS.

Ver. 73—80. There is no want of evidence that man has fallen from his original glory; and that, amidst all the proofs which his nature still affords of divine workmanship, he is not, and cannot be, what he was when he came forth from the hand of his Creator. And however painful, yet it is not without its use, for us to examine the ruin of our former greatness. To the child of God it is especially profitable. He knows that the great end of the gospel is to bring man back to the state in which he was before the introduction of sin, and, therefore, he takes encouragement to pray that he may have understanding to learn God's commandments. This plea he can urge with the more earnestness, because by granting it God will glorify himself, and returning men will be gladdened. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; and so he owns God has been to him, even in those cases in which, by his judgments, he has crossed, at the time, his hopes and desires; for he feels that the design of every afflictive dealing has been to rebuke him for sin, and to animate him to holiness. On this account, his remembrance of the divine judgments gives juster confidence to his prayer for spiritual blessings. All his supplications for comfort and quickening grace have this as their end, that his heart may be sound in God's statutes. Can we appeal to the Searcher of hearts, in our prayers, that his law is our delight, and that we meditate on his precepts?

Ver. 81—88. There are many fluctuations in the condition of the child of God. However desirable to him that it were otherwise, his faith often fails, and he mourns as a consequence over his declension in the graces of the divine life. Some have vainly endeavoured to demonstrate that such a case cannot be; the psalmist may be regarded as telling us here that it often is so. In such case, where can the de-

vout mind hope for comfort but from the divine word? What so properly ought to be the object of prayer as the increase of faith? The formidable nature of his spiritual adversaries is that which renders faith of the highest moment. Their snares, their persecutions, and their wicked devices, it is hard to withstand; but the shield of faith quenches all their fiery darts. If we never feel spiritual anxiety, we have reason to fear we are still without hope. If we have no enemies, we can have no faith.

Ver. 89—96. It is a pleasant, and, if rightly conducted, it is a profitable thing, to study the operations of nature, and to examine into the laws by which the whole creation is governed and preserved in order and beauty; but to the believing heart such exercises are doubly gratifying, for in the harmony of all the parts of the universe, and in the steadfast operation of nature's laws, he sees the working of his heavenly Father, and gathers fresh confidence of faith in the unalterable promises of the written word. It is by the ordinance of God that the heavens are made continually to declare his glory. It is he that establishes the earth, and it abideth; so also it is that, by his word of promise and grace, he speaks peace to the soul that can find relief from no other quarter. The precepts of the gospel give quickening to the soul that is ready to die; and he that has been made to know that God is the source of his comfort, looks to him for the completion of that which he has begun. By divine teaching we learn the breadth of the law, and it is only by grace that we can make it our delight.

PRAYER.

O God, our Creator, who hast made us fearfully and wonderfully, and whose inspiration did at the first give us understanding, we have much cause to bless thee that thou art still permitting us to worship at thy footstool. We confess that by sinning against thee we have made ourselves, and reduced our souls to shame, perplexity, and sorrow. Instead of being perplexed at thy judgments, we may well wonder that thou hast not altogether disowned thine own dishonoured handiwork, by driving us for ever from thy presence. Yet thou hast spoken in thy word of thy purpose of mercy. Thou art making provision for again rearing thy temple in the hearts of men, and restoring thine image to those souls which are darkened and defaced by transgression. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to the lively hope. Blessed be he that came to save us. Blessed be the Spirit who vouchsafes to accomplish this good work in our hearts. O pardon our sins for thy mercies' sake, even through the shed blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. Let thy merciful kindness be for our comfort. Thou knowest how ready we are to be fascinated by the things of this earth, to the neglect of our souls, and how we often sink into

self-righteousness, while we profess to make salvation our chief concern. O Lord, do thou then by thy Spirit fix our hearts on the things that belong to our peace. Grant that we may never be moved away from the hope that is in Christ, nor despair of thy mercy. Do thou who, at the first, didst command the light to shine out of darkness, shine into our hearts again, to give us the knowledge of thy glory. Restore to us thine image which we have lost; grant us understanding that we may learn thy commandments; and renew us in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after the likeness of him who created us. We are surrounded by enemies, we are beset by dangers, and our hearts are weak and treacherous. O do thou uphold and strengthen us, that we may never make shipwreck of our profession, but that by our steadfastness we may gladden the hearts of those that fear thee. Blessed be thy name for the privileges of another sabbath; and grant that a blessing may follow all the religious services, whether public or private, in which we have this day engaged. Pity those who dwell in the lands of blood and cruelty, who have no sabbaths, and who are in darkness because they have not received thy word. Have mercy on those who are misimproving their privileges, and who hate the light. Let the cry of the afflicted, and the sighing of the prisoner, come up before thee; and prepare us also for the days of darkness and sorrow. Hear us in these our requests for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRaise—PSALM CXXVII.

SCRIPTURE—EZEKIEL II. III.

REMARKS.

'Son of man,' seems to be a title given to Ezekiel in consequence of his being invested with the prophetic office. Christ is called 'the Son of man,' because he is that person of the Godhead who assumed the human nature in order that he might execute the offices of his mediatorship. Because Ezekiel was a man, he could sympathize with those among whom he ministered; but how much more He who is touched with a feeling of all our infirmities!

Ver. 1. God manifests his grace toward sinful men by addressing to them invitations of mercy, and solemn warnings and remonstrances, even after they have misimproved many privileges. This was strikingly manifest in the history of ancient Israel. By a succession of prophets he continued to deal with them even after they had proved themselves 'impudent and stiff-necked children, and a rebellious house.' So

it is that the long-suffering patience of heaven waits on ungodly men. If sinners perish, it is because they will not hear.

Ver. 2. Fidelity to his master, freedom from the spirit of the world, and tenderness for immortal souls, are essential qualifications in him who would be a faithful minister. If a man is not prepared sometimes to encounter stern looks and hard words, and even obloquy and persecution, how can he prove a workman that needeth not to be ashamed? God's messengers are called, at all hazards, to the fearless discharge of their duty, and woe to him who falters!

Ver. 3. The substance of the doctrine that the ministers of salvation are called to unfold has been, in all ages, substantially the same. If they must speak words of 'lamentation, and mourning, and woe,' that is because men will not listen to the tidings of peace which they deliver. God addresses warning to sinners because they are slow to receive his promises.

CHAP. III. 1. It can be of little moment to inquire whether the command to Ezekiel to eat the roll of his prophecies was to be literally obeyed; but even on the supposition that it was so, it never can be considered as an example to be followed to the letter. The ancient prophets were called to perform many symbolical acts; and when we notice that 'eating' in scripture is a term used to denote spiritual participation, we must conceive the lesson here taught to be, that he who teaches others ought to know and feel the truths which he proclaims.

Ver. 2. He who has a relish for God's word, regarding it 'as honey for sweetness,' must feel it no hard office to make it known to others. A believing heart disposes such a one to encounter many difficulties. But he has this especially for his encouragement, that God is with him to strengthen him, and that in no case is he called to wage war on his own charge. Even when he goes, in bitterness weeping, while he bears the precious seed, he is made to feel, amidst the heat of his spirit, that 'the hand of the Lord is strong upon him.'

Ver. 3. But amidst all their encouragements, the ministers of Christ, and the same thing may be said of every Christian, are called to consider how responsible is their situation. They are watchmen; they watch for souls. If they are unfaithful, if they prophesy smooth things in every case, and permit the wicked to sin unwarned, fearful is the forfeit that will be exacted of them. The blood of souls is on their skirts. On the other hand, how abundant is the reward to the faithful watchman! He has delivered his soul. If sinners have failed to profit by his counsels, their blood is on their own heads; but if they have listened to his words, he has the commendation due to one who has saved a soul from death. But every Christian should consider himself as a watchman. He has received the light of divine truth that he may impart it to others, and he is guilty if he hides his lamp under a bushel. Parents, and teachers, and men of influence, ought particularly to consider this.

Ver. 4. When God at one time ordained the prophet to silence, and at another time to speak, this was designed for a warning to the Israelites, that the day of grace would soon pass away, and that it was

now or never with them. So it is that God removes his candlestick from men when they do not repent.

PRAYER.

O God, most holy and righteous, we acknowledge that we have rebelled against thee. We have sinned with our fathers, and have done wickedly, and have been froward and stiff-necked children. From our childhood we have been taught thy word, we have been permitted to wait on thee in thine ordinances, and we have enjoyed many quiet sabbaths. Thou hast addressed us by the ministers of salvation. Our dwellings have been changed, yet thou hast still continued to afford us the light of sacred truth; and we have had line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. Yet, after all these warnings and instructions, we have been unprofitable and unfruitful. Surely it is because thou art long-suffering that thou hast not utterly cast us off, and that thou art still warning us by thy providence, and by thy word, to flee from the wrath to come. O grant, merciful Father, that none of us may be guilty of neglecting the great salvation, or of stifling our own convictions, that thou shouldest, in just displeasure, give us over to a reprobate mind, and a seared conscience. May we know by thy grace what it is to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, daily to participate in his blessings, and to be fed out of his fullness, that we may enjoy the full benefits flowing from reconciliation with thee, and may bring forth, under a constraining sense of thy love, the fruits of righteousness to thy praise. And when we remember how unprofitable and unfruitful we have been during our past lives, may we be filled with ingenuous sorrow, and earnest desire, henceforward to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. We bless thee for the ordinances of grace regularly dispensed among us, and that thou hast made provision, by the ministry of reconciliation, for the warning of sinners, and the edification of thine own people. May the ministers of Christ feel and know the importance and preciousness of the truths which they are called to proclaim to others, that they may speak as becomes dying men to dying men, and with a heartfelt tenderness for the precious souls of their fellow-sinners. Give them grace to be faithful in the execution of the sacred trust committed to them, that they may be ever animated by zeal for the honour of their great Master, and for the extension of his kingdom. Thou knowest the temptations they may often feel to yield to a worldly spirit, or to temporise amidst the reproach and obloquy of wicked men. Give them, then, strength to live above the world

while they are in it, and to give good proof that reverence for thine authority has served to banish every other fear. While they feed others, may they themselves be fed abundantly, that they may be the better prepared to endure hardships, and may prove in all things faithful watchmen. And do thou keep us all mindful, that for the use we make of our privileges we must give an account to thee at the last day; and that if the ministers of the gospel have been faithful, our blood must rest on our own heads if we die in our sins. O grant that many who have been living at a distance from thee may now take warning, and flee from the wrath to come. Let not the wickedness and unbelief that still prevail in our land provoke thee to turn away from us as a nation in holy displeasure. Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish thou the way of the just, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LII.

SCRIPTURE—2 TIMOTHY III.

REMARKS.

In the first six verses of this chapter St Paul forewarns Timothy of certain persons who, professing the Christian religion, and undertaking to teach others, should nevertheless be alike corrupt in character and false in doctrine. It was important for Timothy to be aware that such persons were about to appear, that, on the one hand, he might be on his guard against those 'evil communications' which 'corrupt good manners,' and that, on the other, he might labour, as a minister of Christ, to counteract the evil influence of these inconsistent and wicked men. Alas! that human nature should attain to such a pitch of wickedness as is here described. Alas! that the vices here enumerated, obviously and fearfully opposed alike to the spirit of the Christian gospel, and to the precepts of the Christian law, should ever be practised by any who 'name the name of Christ.' But is every one of us entirely free from each and all of them? Is there no selfishness among us? no covetousness? no vain-glorious boasting? no pride? no blasphemy? no undutifulness to parents? no ingratitude to benefactors? no cold-heartedness towards fellow-creatures? no faithlessness to promises? no false accusation? no sensual indulgence? no contempt for pious persons or for sacred things? no treachery in the management of business? no rash or headstrong mode of acting? no arrogance or vanity? no preference of earthly pleasures to the all-sufficient God? no hypocrisy? no glaring inconsistency between religious profession and moral character? If by divine grace, we have been led to 'crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts,' and to

'adorn the doctrine of Jesus Christ;' let us give God the glory. And O, if any of us is still the victim of natural corruption, let him see, in the awful picture which St Paul here holds up before the eye of Timothy, the degradation, the vileness, the 'folly,' ver. 9. and the fatal tendency of corrupt principles and habits. Nor let any one say that, although he is still unconverted, he has not yet attained such a height of wickedness as is here described, and therefore need not take the lesson to himself. Sin is progressive, and that very height of wickedness, or a higher still, the unconverted sinner, who is now comparatively regular and decent, will perhaps have reached before many years have passed. How may a check be raised? Where may an antidote be found? Let him yield now to the regenerating grace of God.

In the remainder of the chapter, St Paul, in contrast with the representation he has just given, holds up his own doctrine and practice, and the written word of God, as guides and models for his friend. He suggests that Timothy, as his companion in the ministry of the gospel, had attained an intimate acquaintance with his 'doctrine' and 'manner of life,' ver. 10, 11. and, by early instruction in holy Scripture, had learned such principles of divine truth, as were calculated to prepare him for private and public duty, ver. 15—17. This twofold view the apostle turns to practical account, addressing to Timothy the corresponding admonition, 'Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of.' Timothy was *officially* a 'man of God,' and it is not improbable that, in applying to him that appellation, ver. 17. the apostle refers to the office of the ministry. But not only is this precept applicable to private Christians, inasmuch as they are elsewhere enjoined by the same apostle to be 'stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,' but the great principles here propounded respecting St Paul's 'doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, and deliverance,' and respecting Scripture as 'given by inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,' have obviously no exclusive bearing on Christian ministers. Of St Paul's character and conduct, let us seriously and prayerfully read the record which the New Testament contains, and let each of us be able, like him, to say, 'The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.' In reading Scripture, let us realize the truth that it 'is given by God's inspiration.' What it declares, let us confidently believe; what it commands, let us cordially perform. Even the Old Testament, containing as it does such a treasury of practical and precious truth, is well fitted by God's blessing, to promote the spiritual improvement of the soul, and recording as it does so many typical and prophetic representations of Christ, was calculated, even before his advent, but still more thereafter, by means of the illustration which his ministry and that of his apostles cast on the meaning of the sacred page, to lead to the 'faith which is in Christ Jesus,' ver. 15. Nevertheless, let us be truly thankful that the New Testament has been

added to the Old, and 'continue in the things' of which it assures us. O that, by the blessing of that Spirit who endited Scripture for the instruction and consolation of the human soul, we may indeed be 'wise unto salvation.'

PRAYER.

Glorious Lord God, manifest thy greatness to our souls, that we may worship reverently before thee, and convince us of our own unworthiness, that we may rightly estimate thy kindness and condescension in permitting and inviting us to ask blessings at thy hand. Great O Lord, is thy mercy towards us, and we are now experiencing thy goodness in having another opportunity to pray. May we experience thy goodness also in receiving an answer to our prayers. O give us what we truly need. May we possess a competent portion of this world's substance, such a portion as thou knowest to be reasonable and right. But O, convince us that we need provision for the immortal soul, and dispose us diligently and perseveringly to use the means by which it is to be obtained. May we daily read that word of thine which is profitable for doctrine and reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness. May we devoutly meditate on the sacred truths which it contains. Sabbath by Sabbath may we enter the house of prayer, and may the word preached be mixed with faith in us who hear it. By earnest supplication, may we ask thy blessing on our souls. May we habitually wait at wisdom's gates, and watch at the posts of her doors. And may we receive instruction not only from the ordinances of thy worship and the lessons of thy word, but also from the events that befall us in the world. May the blessings we possess stir us up to heart-felt gratitude, and may thy bereaving and other afflictive dispensations towards us wean our minds from the creature, and direct them in earnest aspiration and filial confidence towards thee. O give us thy Holy Spirit. May he instruct us in our ignorance, and guide us in our folly. May he sanctify our souls, and shed abroad celestial consolation on our hearts. Be thou thyself our reconciled Father, and in Christ thy Son may we find a friend that loveth at all times, a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Watch over us for good and not for evil, and take us in thine own time to the inheritance. Whether we live or die, may we be the Lord's, and may each one of us have cause to say, I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day. Defend us this night. Spare us, if such be thy holy will, till another day, and grant, that so long as thou continuest

our lives, we may devote them to thy service. Promote thine own cause. Suppress ignorance, irreligion, and vice. Stay wicked men in their wild career. Make manifest to all men the folly as well as criminality of unbelief and crime. Send holy Scripture forth throughout the world, and accompany it by the influence of that Spirit by whom it was inspired. From childhood may immortal creatures be taught the doctrines of thy gospel, and the precepts of thy law, and by the holy Scriptures may they be wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Father of mercies, answer these our unworthy petitions for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 30.

SCRIPTURE—EZEKIEL VII.

REMARKS.

This chapter contains a prediction of the dreadful judgments by which the sins of Israel were to be punished. God was shortly to pour out his anger upon them, judge them according to their ways, and recompense them for all their abominations, ver. 8. None of them were to remain, neither was there to be any wailing for them, ver. 11. The sword was to devour without, and the famine within, ver. 15. All hands were to be feeble, and all knees weak as water, ver. 17. The law was to perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancient, ver. 26. King and people, wise and foolish, young and old, were equally to be overwhelmed by a great national ruin, because the land was full of bloody crimes, and the city of violence, and because the Most High determined to convince them that there was a God who judgeth in the earth.

The principles of the divine government embodied in this prediction are of perpetual and universal application. For example, nations, as such, are dealt with by God in judgment and mercy, and therefore, in that capacity, ought to acknowledge and serve him. All these Jews were not equally wicked; but as a 'sinful nation,' all were punished. And whilst sun and moon endure, God shall punish not only the individuals and the families, but the nations that call not on his name. When we think of this, and also that our own nation is so deeply criminal in the sight of God, not only because of our national sins and contempt for God's authority, but because we spread out before the eye of omniscience such an awful scene of sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, contempt for the promises and threatenings of the gospel, and all this in the face of so many advantages of which others are deprived, we may well say, 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not.' 'O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years. In wrath remember mercy.'

Not only so, this chapter proclaims aloud the truth, that even in this life 'there is no peace to the wicked.' Indeed, all the temporal evil to which we are exposed is the direct result of sin. Why do we live in a world of woe instead of in a paradise, and see around us so many ravages of disease, war, pestilence, and death? Simply because 'sin hath entered the world.' Sin is the great and fruitful parent of every woe, and not one particle of the evil by which we are surrounded would have existed had not man sinned. This is the grand fact which should be impressed on every mind. But besides this, even as in this chapter, there are special punishments which accompany and follow the commission of special sins; and whilst all are involved in the general doom of Adam, each sinner, and each separate nation, is specially made to feel that it is an evil and a bitter thing to depart from the living God. The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth; and 'his wrath hath been revealed from heaven, 'in every past age,' against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.' He puts into the hand of the drunkard a cup of trembling, destroys the gains of the thief, discovers the hiding-place and guilt of the murderer, makes the tongue of the swearer to cleave to the roof of his mouth. He drowned the old world, poured fire and brimstone on Sodom, drowned Pharaoh in the Red sea, hung up Absalom and Judas in the sight of the sun, made Herod to be eaten up of worms, scattered like vagabonds the whole Jewish nation, and will cast the mystic Babylon down like a great millstone thrown into the sea, never to rise any more at all. All for this, amongst other reasons, that his judgments against sin may appear, and that men may 'see and fear,' and know that 'there is a God that judgeth in the earth.'

'Be sure your sins shall find you out;' 'flee therefore to the blood of sprinkling,' and wash therein. Desire to be taught, by the Spirit of God, to 'hate every false and wicked way.' Know that it is the most exalted patriotism which, in any measure, saves your country from sin which is the destruction of any people, and the noblest brotherly kindness, which 'saves a soul from death, and covers a multitude of sins;' but 'the residue of the Spirit,' by which such results can be accomplished, is only with God.

PRAYER.

O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day, to our kings, to our princes, to our fathers, to all the people of the land, because we have sinned against thee. We are a seed of evil doers, and have sinned times and ways without number, from our youth until now. Our sins have been committed against the clearest light and the richest mercy, against the remonstrances of our own consciences, and in the face of our solemn vows. Thou hast written to us the great things of thy law, and given to us the exceeding great and precious promises of

thy gospel; but we have undervalued thy mercies and thy judgments, and despised the riches of thy forbearance in Christ Jesus. Behold, O Lord, we are vile, and what shall we answer unto thee, O thou preserver of men? Our own hearts condemn us, and thou art greater than our hearts, and knowest all things. Justly mightest thou condemn us to reap the fruit of our own doings by removing our privileges from us, and pouring out thy wrath upon us as individuals, and as a people, even unto the uttermost. But thou art God and not man, therefore we are not consumed. There is mercy with thee that thou mayest be feared, and plenteous redemption that thou mayest be sought unto. Thou hast no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he should turn to thee and live; and thou hast made thine own Son to be sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. O Father of mercies, work in us now before thee all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power. Wash us all in the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Pardon our iniquities, for they are very many, and heal our souls, which have greatly sinned against thee. And O gracious God, do thou rescue us from the dominion of sin. May we hate it with a perfect hatred. May we shun those paths in which destroyers go. May the Spirit of all grace persuade and enable us not to live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again. And we beseech thee grant that, having our hearts established in thy fear and love, and our goings in the ways of thy commandments, we may go on from strength to strength, unwearied, conquering and to conquer all our spiritual enemies. O Lord, fill the hearts of the rulers of our land with thy fear; and let all the ends of the earth see thy salvation. Bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end. Establish universally the way of the just. Be the friend of our friends. Forgive our enemies, and teach us to forgive them. Supply the wants of the poor; heal the diseases of the afflicted; save the souls of the dying; may we learn to die. Accept of our thanks for the kindness of last night. Thou hast permitted us to take quiet rest, and hast caused us to dwell in safety. May our souls, and all that is within us, be stirred up to magnify and bless thy name. Give us this day our daily bread. And may the Lord be our sun and shield, and bless our lying down and our rising up, from henceforth even for ever. Hear these our imperfect prayers, forgive our many

sins, save us with an everlasting salvation; and unto thee, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, shall we ascribe glory, majesty, and dominion, world without end. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXIV. 4.

SCRIPTURE—2 TIMOTHY IV.

REMARKS.

The epistle, of which this is the last chapter, seems to have been written immediately before the death of its inspired author. In this chapter, striking reference is made to that event, to which the apostle looked forward with exalted confidence. 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, *henceforth*,' that is, throughout an endless eternity, 'there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.' What a wonderful illustration of the change which living Christianity works upon human nature, and human prospects! This is the very same man who went as a persecutor to Damascus, but see how changed! The soul filled with cruelty, is now filled with love; the persecutor is an apostle; the man without God and without hope, is the leader of Christ's people, about to die a martyr to his cause, and, in the prospect of that martyrdom, he triumphs in the highest strains of exaltation. 'This is the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in our eyes.' Let it teach us the absolute necessity of being born again, that 'over us the second death may have no power.' The power which converted a Saul is still omnipotent; the fountain in which he washed, is still open; the heaven of glory to which he has gone, has still room for the chief of sinners. 'Not for me only,' says the apostle, is the crown of righteousness 'laid up,' but unto all them also that love his appearing.' Let us flee to the stronghold as 'prisoners of hope;' even to-day, saith the Lord, will I render double to you.

A striking instance is recorded here of spiritual backsliding. 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.' The scriptures often point out those temptations to abandon the cause of Christ, which arise from worldly considerations. Indeed, 'the world' is one of the three great enemies against which Christians are called to struggle as in a battle, and it appears that in the conflict Demas was overcome. This is all the more striking, when we find (Phil. ver. 24.) the same man saluting the churches under the character of a distinguished Christian, and in company with the inspired apostle. 'All are not Israel, that are of Israel.' 'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' And let us all pray, that our blessed Redeemer may intercede for us, that 'our faith fail not,' when 'Satan desires to have us, that he may sift us as wheat.' 'If ye keep the word of my patience, I will keep you,' says Christ, 'in the hour of temptation, which shall try all the men that dwell upon the earth.'

The minute directions which the apostle gives here, concerning his 'cloak,' 'parchments,' and the various salutations which he sent to his friends, even amidst such trying circumstances, ought to teach us to neglect no duty in this world, even in the immediate prospects of another. Those who upon pretence of attending to their spiritual interest, neglect the interests of time, bring discredit upon Christianity. 'Not slothful in business,' is not only in the same chapter, but in the same verse of the word of God, with 'fervent in spirit serving the Lord.' 'Attend to thy flock, look well to the state of thy herds.' 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise,' are important scriptural precepts. Let us avoid all extremes, but especially let us 'seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto us.'

PRAYER.

We will extol thee, our God, O king. We will bless thy name, for ever and ever. Every day will we bless thee, and praise thy name, for ever and ever. Thou didst at first create us out of nothing, and thy merciful visitation upholds our souls in life, our bodies in health; keeps our eyes from tears, our feet from falling; makes the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice over us. How precious have been thy thoughts towards us, and how great has been the sum of them; we cannot reckon them up in order before thee; if we would attempt to speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. O that our hearts were filled with thy love, and our mouths were filled with thy praise, and that as every day brings fresh proofs of thy loving kindness, every day may see us devote ourselves anew to thy love and service. Eternal thanks be to thee, O God of Abraham; because when we had rebelled against thee, and exposed ourselves to thy just and eternal indignation, thy thoughts towards us were thoughts of love, and thou didst lay help upon one mighty to save. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up for them an horn of salvation in the house of his servant David. And blessed be he who came in the name of the Lord to save us, who though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. O let not the manifestation of thy mercy be in vain with regard to any of us. If yet in vain, as thou hast been graciously pleased to lay the chastisement of our peace on Christ, grant that by his stripes we may all be healed. Adopt us into thy family. Make us heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Search us, O God, and try us, and see what wicked ways are in us, and lead us in thy way everlasting. May we live as

children of the promise, having our treasure in heaven, and our hearts also there, and following those things which are pure, and honest, and lovely, and of good report. And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, make us perfect to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight. May we not deceive ourselves with a name to live, whilst we are dead. We earnestly pray for all mankind. Have respect unto thy covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. Revive thy work in our own land in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make known; in deserved wrath remember mercy. Bless our friends with all temporal blessings, but especially let their souls prosper before thee. May they all be thine in that day when thou makest up thy jewels. Be very gracious to the afflicted. As their day is, so may their strength be. Jesus, the son of David, have mercy on them; send them strength out of Zion, and if they are appointed unto death, may they be prepared for heaven, and at length fall asleep in Jesus. Teach us so to number our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom. Watch over us for good this day. May all our wants be supplied; and may we be taught to praise thy goodness in the land of the living. Uphold our goings in the ways of thy testimonies, that our feet may not slide, and command thy blessing upon us, even life that shall never end, and righteousness from the God of our salvation, for all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXII. 27.

SCRIPTURE—EZEKIEL XI.

REMARKS.

The rulers of Israel, in too many periods of her eventful history, were the leaders in wickedness. It was so in the present instance. Nor can there be a greater curse to a nation than ungodly rulers, not only as bringing directly down upon the people the judgments of God, but as fostering and promoting sin amongst their subjects. 'When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the land mourneth.' When the wicked are exalted, 'vile men walk on every side.'

God sees and marks the conduct of all men in their public, as well as private capacity. Some rulers foolishly imagine, that they are responsible to none; some that they are only responsible to their subjects. God interposes, and by his judgments makes them feel that he rules 'amongst the kingdoms of men;'

and will render to every man according to his works. And, although rulers and people may wrap themselves up in a fatal security, 'because sentence against their evil works is not speedily executed;' although they may despise the voice of God's prophets, as the Jews did in this instance; the messengers of God must continue to cry out against iniquity, and point to the ark of safety; and if men will not hear, leaving the issue to prove that there is indeed 'a God that judgeth in the earth.'

This chapter not only contains threatenings against wickedness, but comfort to the people of God. When driven into distant lands, God promises to be 'a little sanctuary unto them;' (ver. 16.) to give a new heart and a right spirit to those whom he hath chosen unto salvation, and to restore his people to their own land. The *spiritual* restoration is to precede the temporal. For since all temporal evil results from spiritual, by removing the cause, the effect also will be removed. Hence, the grand object of the gospel is to 'create men anew in Christ Jesus.' When that is accomplished, there shall be a new heaven and a new earth.' The world was once a paradise, but it was when sin was unknown. Heaven is a paradise still, but it is because there is no sin there. The world will become a paradise again; but it shall be when 'the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth, as the waters cover the sea.' And in conformity with the same great principle, the captivity of Sion will be brought back 'like the streams of the south' when God shall take away the hard and stony heart from Israel, and give his ancient people 'an heart of flesh.' Let us all pray for the dawn of that glorious day; for if the casting away of the Jews conferred unspeakable blessings on the Gentiles, what shall their restoration be but 'life from the dead?' Above all, let us seek earnestly our own regeneration. 'Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' And 'in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free; for 'by him have we all access by one Spirit unto the Father.' 'Ask and ye shall receive, and your joy shall be full.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, we adore thee as the high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity, and the praises thereof. Thou art seated on a throne high and lifted up; thy train filleth the heavenly temple. Ten thousand times ten thousand angels exalting in glory and strength, veil their faces with their wings, whilst they cry day and night, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is full of thy glory. Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him? What are we, or what has our fathers' house been, that we are permitted to approach so great and holy a Lord God. Lo! the heavens are not clean in thy sight; thou chargedst thine angels with folly; how much more abominable is man, who drinketh iniquity like water. Adored be thy name, that by the death and ascension of Jesus, a new and living

way is opened; whereby we may come with boldness to thy throne, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in every time of need. For thou hast made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Heavenly Father! we draw near unto thee at this time, to thank thee for thine unspeakable gift, Christ Jesus; and for all the glorious hopes which through him we are permitted to cherish. We rejoice that he died for the offences of his people, and rose again for their justification; and that through him pardon, and peace, and eternal life are freely offered, even to the chief of sinners. O may it be given to each of us, in the behalf of Christ, to believe on his name; and believing on him, may we be united to him, as branches of the true vine, and receive pardon, peace, sanctification, and every blessing. Shine upon us with the light of thy countenance; and give us peace, even that peace which passeth all understanding, to keep our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. May we put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the Lord Jesus, and walk in him, being rooted and grounded in love. Keep us from every evil, and especially from sin. Cleanse us from secret faults. Keep us back from all presumptuous sins, that we may be upright, and free from the great transgression. May we serve thee in holiness and righteousness all our days, that in the ages to come, even through the ages of eternity, we may show forth the riches of thy grace, and thy kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus. Save thy people every where, and bless thine inheritance; feed them also, and lift them up forever. And may those that love the Lord Jesus, be more of one heart and of one mind: may there be no divisions among them. Satisfy our friends early with thy loving-kindness, and uphold them with the right hand of thy righteousness. May they all at last return, and come to Sion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. Be near to those that mourn in every time of trouble; and may affliction work the peaceable fruits of righteousness in them that are exercised thereby. Teach the living and the strong to remember, that although they live many days, and see good in them all, the days of darkness are coming, and that these days may be many. Be with us during this day, and all our days, and never leave us, nor forsake us, but lead us in the paths of righteousness, for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 4.

SCRIPTURE—TITUS I.

REMARKS.

The same fervour of zeal by which the apostle Paul was distinguished before his conversion; although proceeding now from a new principle, and directed to an entirely different end; characterized his labours in the work of the Lord. As Jerusalem was too narrow a field for his persecuting spirit; so as an inspired apostle, he felt as if 'the care of all the churches' was committed to him. And in this exhibition of a spirit of boundless Christian love, he left us a noble example. Let us in this be a follower of him, as he was of Christ.

This chapter contains, first, directions in regard to the kind of ministers to be ordained at Crete. These directions were intended to guide the office-bearers of the church in every age. They point to two distinct kinds of qualifications, neither of which will do without the other. The first are moral qualities; 'a bishop,' or Christian minister—for the word merely signifies, an overseer, and is applicable to all ordained Christian ministers—'must be blameless;' in other words, a man under the influence of the truth of which he is appointed an ambassador; and the practical effect of which is to make the man of God 'perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.' The people must not be able to turn round and say, 'physician heal thyself,' for there is no preaching so powerful for good, or evil, as the preaching of example. But lest any should suppose, that mere personal Christianity is sufficient to constitute an efficient herald of the gospel, that the same qualities which constitute a *Christian* are sufficient for a *Christian minister*, the apostle points to intellectual qualifications also, as equally essential. A bishop must be 'able by sound doctrine, both to exhort, and to convince gainsayers.' And all this, not merely in his own opinion, but in the opinion of competent judges, as in the case before us. It is on these scriptural grounds that our Church proceeds in preventing novices from intruding themselves into the ministry, and in insisting upon a thorough examination of the character and talents of such as stand at her altars. Let the people also learn to respect this divinely appointed ordinance of the Christian ministry, and avoid the crude mistakes of those that are puffed up with pride.

This chapter also contains a searching and plain description of the people of Crete, who seem to have been notorious for their wickedness. In dealing with them, the apostle admonishes Titus to use all plainness of speech. The hurt of the daughter of Sion must not be 'healed slightly,' by men who 'cry peace, peace, when there is no peace.' The spiritual physician must lay open the disease with a bold and skillful hand, as the first step towards applying a remedy. And those who take offence at this, and wish the prophets to 'prophesy smooth things,' only manifest in what a dangerous state they are, and how much they need to be aroused. Never did any 'preacher of righteousness' denounce the iniquities of men in stronger or plainer terms, than our blessed

Lord. And every minister who sees heaven and hell as the only alternative of man's conduct, in regard to the offered mercy, 'will lift up his voice like a trumpet,' and warn men to 'flee from the wrath to come.' Let us learn to esteem the bold and faithful preaching of the gospel. Better to be awakened now, than when it is too late. And then is the word of God effectual when it is 'quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword.' 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who faintest not, neither art weary; there is no searching of thine understanding. By thy word were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the breathing of thy mouth. Thou didst speak, and it was done; thou didst command, and all things stood fast. And this day they stand as thou didst ordain them, for they are all thy creatures. All thy works praise thee, and thy saints bless thee. Worthy art thou to receive glory, and dominion, and power; for thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. But in the glorious work of redemption, thou hast especially abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other. All we like sheep had gone astray, we had turned every one to his own way, but thou hast laid upon Christ the iniquities of us all. O the height and the depth, the breadth and the length, of the love of God, in Christ Jesus, it passeth knowledge. Do thou who didst at first command the light to shine out of darkness, shine into our hearts, giving us the light of the knowledge of thy glory in the face of Jesus Christ, whom not having seen, do thou enable us greatly to love, and in whom though now we see him not, yet believing, may we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. And beholding as in a glass, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, may we be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. We are insufficient for any good word or work, for it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. But do thou sprinkle us with clean water, and we shall be clean; work in us both to will and to do of thy good pleasure; and make us meet to become partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Save our souls with an everlasting salvation. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build up the walls of Jerusalem. Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered, and let those that hate him flee before him. Let thy way be made known in the earth, and thy saving

health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O Lord; let all the people praise thee. Comfort and bless our friends. Keep them as the apple of thine eye. Be their portion in the land of the living, their refuge in the time of trouble, their shield and exceeding great reward. Keep us in safety during this night, O thou Shepherd of Israel, who slumberest not, nor sleepest, and to whom the darkness and the light are both alike alway. And all the days and nights of our appointed time may we wait until our change comes; and may an abundant entrance be administered to each of us into thy heavenly kingdom and glory, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLII. 4.

SCRIPTURE—EZEKIEL XVI.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

In this chapter there are set before us the riches of God's mercy to Israel, and the rebellion of Israel against God; the low state from which Israel sprung; the acts of kindness which God performed; the exaltation to which Israel was raised; the gross idolatry to which he turned; the fearful judgments threatened; the deep humiliation and repentance to which he was brought.

1. The state in which God finds Israel. 'Thy nativity is of Canaan, thy father an Amorite, thy mother an Hittite,' ver. 3. These tribes were idolaters, enemies to God, and therefore under his curse. The origin of Israel was the same. This is our origin; we sprung from a corrupt state. 'We were shapen in sin, and brought forth in iniquity.' We are corrupted, and exhibit the spirit and temper of Canaanites. 'Thou wast cast out in the open field,' ver. 5. Man is cast out from the presence of God, like a child cast out before any attentions are shown to it. Adam and all his seed are out cast; and driven from paradise and the presence of God, to the wilderness of a state of rejection and wretchedness. 'Polluted in their own blood,' ver. 6. An infant polluted in its own blood is an affecting sight. Unrenewed sinners are polluted in their own blood; guilty, and already many wounds inflicted, and blood shed. Believers have been in this state, and have felt it. 'Naked,' ver. 7, 8. How complete the wretchedness of sinners! In the open field, polluted in their own blood, and naked. Without ornament, and without defence. 'No eye pitied them.' When God pronounces a curse, none can impart a blessing. As sinners, we can find no effectual pity in creation.

2. The riches of God's mercy in commanding deliverance. 'I passed by thee, and saw thee,' ver. 6. Our salvation is all of sovereignty. The omniscient and compassionate eye of Jehovah passed by the outcast sinner, and made him an object of love.

'Thy time was the time of love,' ver. 8. All the former time was lost; this alone is 'thy time.' It is the 'time of love,' in the dealings of God, and in the experience of the soul. Others have their time of love; but the time of the pouring out of God's love on the soul is pre-eminently 'the time of love.' 'I said unto thee, Live,' ver. 6. It is the mandate of Jehovah, of him who has life in himself, and who can give life to the dead. 'I spread my skirt over thee,' ver. 8. God spread his skirt over the first-born of Israel, by the sprinkling of blood on the door-post, when the first-born of Egypt were slain. He spread his cloud over Israel in their wanderings in the wilderness. God spreads the skirt of his power, righteousness, and love, over his people; and they have confidence, comfort, and safety. 'Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield.' 'A man shall be a hiding-place from the storm.' 'I washed thee with water, and anointed thee with oil,' ver. 9. The infant in its blood is washed with water to cleanse it; and anointed with oil to heal and comfort it. The blessed Spirit of our God imparts 'the washing of regeneration;' forms his graces in the soul, and anoints the soul as with fresh oil. 'I saw thee, and entered into a covenant with thee,' ver. 8. 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.'

3. The unworthy conduct of Israel, ver. 15—58. Yet God did not utterly forsake Israel, but did cause him to remember, and be confounded, and not open his mouth any more, because of his shame. May there be poured out on us, and on all the churches, a spirit of true repentance, ver. 60—63.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, we, and the whole race to which we belong, have been idolaters. It is thine unalienable prerogative to claim and to receive the homage of worship; and thou wilt not give this glory to another. Yet we have given this glory to our idols; we have been guilty of fearful idolatry, in giving to the creature our trust, our supreme love, our worship, and our service, and we have sought from the creature our happiness. Thou hast justly been offended with us, and hast pronounced on us a fearful curse. We were, in the persons of our first parents, cast out from thy presence to the wilderness of a state of rejection and misery. We have lost thy favour, communion with thee, and all the blessings flowing from thy gracious person; and we have merited the fate of the Canaanites, who were devoted to the curse which their iniquities deserved. As sinners, we are polluted in our blood, guilty, and already experiencing the infliction of many wounds. We are destitute of righteousness, naked, defenceless, and exposed to shame and wretchedness; and there is no eye to pity, nor hand to help. O convince us thoroughly of our sinful and miserable condition; and lead us to cry to thee, God, be merciful to us sinners. Adored be thy name, thou didst pass by us in

thy sovereign love and mercy, and thou saidst, Live; yea, when we were in our blood, thou saidst, Live. Thou didst form and reveal the purpose of giving up thine only begotten, thy beloved Son to death. Thou didst lay on him the iniquity of us all, and hast redeemed us from the curse, through his being made a curse for us; and we adore thee he has said, Because I live, ye shall live also. Grant us to attain to the life of pardon and justification, to the life of grace in our souls, that we may come eventually to the enjoyment of the life of glory in heaven. We are exposed to many injuries and hardships, O do thou spread thy covering wings over us. Fulfil thy promise, I will spread my skirt over thee; say unto us, Fear not, I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward. Wash us with the washing of regeneration, and anoint us as with fresh oil. Pour down thy Spirit on our souls, as the Spirit of truth and of holiness, of wisdom and of might, of supplication, adoption, and consolation, that we may have in us a savour of Christ, and be thoroughly furnished to every good word and work. May our feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; that we may be prepared for the hardships of the warfare, and of the enemy. We give ourselves up to thee, to serve thee, and to be sanctified and saved by thee; and we take thee to be our God, Redeemer, and Portion. Make with us an everlasting covenant, swear unto us, and make us thine; and enable us to make with thee a covenant by sacrifice, even the sacrifice offered on Calvary. Keep us from being unfaithful in thy covenant; let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, the Son of man whom thou hast made strong for thyself, so henceforth we will not go back from thee. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy fear to shine, and we shall be saved. Let thy way be known on the earth, and thy saving health to all people. Make known thy salvation to the heathen; let the people praise thee, let all the people praise thee. Rend asunder the vail from the hearts of the seed of Abraham; and gather the dispersed of Israel, in their conversion to God, into one. Prosper the efforts which are made in their behalf, and let their restoration be like life from the dead to the Gentiles. Let thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Let the whole earth be filled with thy glory. Now unto the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be honour, glory, blessing, and praise, world without end. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXIV. 3.

SCRIPTURE—TITUS II.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. The ministry. What a blessing to any people is a faithful gospel ministry, in its instruction, its example, and in its authority!

Direction. The minister of Christ must speak 'the things which become sound doctrine,' that the people may be sound in faith and in manners, ver. 1. The doctrine must be with 'uncorruptness,' ver. 7; it admits of no substitute or admixture. The manner, with 'gravity and sincerity,' ver. 7. Levity or hypocrisy is most unbefitting the messenger of God to man, who is called to treat with them concerning life and death.

Example, ver. 7. 'In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works.' The minister must be what he preaches; exhibit the doctrine in character, and teach by his life. Thus he will raise the esteem of his people, prepare them to receive his instruction, and draw them to his ministry.

Authority, ver. 15. 'Exhort and rebuke with all authority.' The minister of Christ possesses an authority deputed to him from his Master, which he himself should feel, and which he should cause his people to feel; an authority in doctrine and in discipline. The true servant of Christ drinks into the spirit of his Master, who 'taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes.' He will 'exhort and rebuke,' in love for the souls of men, and with hope in the presence and favour of Christ, that men may be impressed, and turned from sin to serve the living God.

2. The character required, and formed, by the gospel ministry in different ages and relations. 'Aged men,' ver. 2. ought to study gravity and sobriety, as becometh their years; to possess sound views of divine truth, a faith operative in its character, producing charity and patience. 'The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.' 'Aged women,' ver. 3. should have their behaviour in holiness, not in slander, or intemperance; but as their age entitles them, their wisdom should qualify them, to be 'teachers of good things.' To teach 'the young women,' ver. 4, 5. to acquire and exhibit such a temper and character, as that they shall be blessings to their husbands, their children, and their household, and as that they shall appear amiable, kind, and useful in all the relations and circumstances of life. 'Young men,' ver. 6. should guard against pride, and vanity, and excess of every kind, and be humble, and teachable, and moderate in all things. 'Seekest thou great things for thyself, seek them not.' 'Servants,' ver. 9. are to be exhorted to the faithful performance of their duty to their masters, in strict obedience in all things lawful, in a respectful regard to their wishes and comfort, in not interfering with the smallest portion of their property, and in constant and unvarying faithfulness to every trust.

3. The way in which men come to right character, ver. 11—15. 'The grace of God,' in its source,

good will; its blessings, justification, adoption, and sanctification; its application by the influences of the Holy Ghost; its medium, the gospel of the grace of God. 'Brings salvation,' provides salvation for man, and prepares man for salvation. The grace of God 'hath appeared to all men,' in all classes and ages. It is suited to all, required by all; it hath appeared to all, that all may receive it, experience it, and be saved by it. Grace teaches men what to 'deny.' 'Ungodliness,' every thing in sentiment, affection, word and deed, contrary to the perfections, glory, word and worship of God. 'Worldly lust,' pride, impurity, covetousness, lusts which lead to injustice, lying, dealing cruelly and unfaithfully with our fellow-men. Grace teaches how to *live*. 'Soberly,' with regard to our own personal deportment. 'Righteously,' with regard to our relation to others. 'Godly,' with regard to our relation to God. The grace of God teaches man what to 'look for.' 'The glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour.' Our Saviour is the great God; what confidence, reverence, and worship, should this inspire! His coming the second time, without sin, unto salvation, shall be attended with *glory* ineffable. The doctrine inspires 'a blessed hope,' blessed in its future prospects, and present exercise.

PRAYER.

We approach thy majestic throne, O thou who dwellest in the heavens, who art the creator and the preserver of all things, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the God of our salvation. Reveal thy glory in us, and let the apprehension of it produce its proper effects on our spirit, temper, and whole character. In the light of thy holiness may we see our deep depravity, and cry out, Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, for I have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Let the glory of thy justice promptly impress our souls with a sense of guilt and danger, that we may, in saving awakenings of conscience, confess, against thee, thee only, have we sinned, and in thy sight done evil. O may the glory of thy majesty annihilate our pride, subdue our ambition, and cause us to lie in the dust before thee. Adored be thy name for the humiliation of the Son of God, his substitution, obedience, righteousness, triumphs, intercession, and salvation. Behold, O God, our shield, and look on the face of thine Anointed. Unite us personally to him who is the Lord our righteousness; and let his Spirit dwell in us, as a well of living water, springing up to eternal life. Form, and strengthen, and render active in us, all the graces of the Holy Ghost. May faith be in us, directed to its proper object; may we look to him whom we have pierced, and mourn, and be in bitterness for our sin. May faith be in us, working by love, purifying the heart, and overcoming the world.

Create in us a clean heart, renew in us a right spirit; inspire us with a spirit of wisdom, of meekness, of holiness, and of zeal. Blessed be thy name for the dispensation of grace, in the ministry of reconciliation, under which thou hast placed us. Make thy servants the honoured instruments of turning many sinners from darkness to light, from death to life, from the bondage of Satan, to the liberty of the sons of God. Appoint faithful shepherds over the flock of Christ; ministers over thy people who will rightly divide the word of truth; watchmen in the towers of Zion, who will faithfully blow the trumpet, and warn the people as from thee. Clothe thy priests with righteousness and salvation; bless the provisions of Zion, and cause the saints to shout aloud for joy. Bless each one of us, in our respective ages and relations. May the youth remember their Creator; may they love thee, and thou wilt love them; may they seek thee early, and they shall find thee. May the aged not be found standing idle in the market place at the eleventh hour, but diligently working while it is day, faithfully bearing the burden and the heat of the day, that when the service is finished they may enter into the joys of their Lord. May the servants in serving their earthly master, serve Christ. Let great grace be vouchsafed to us all, that it may bring to each one of us salvation, and effectually teach us what to deny, what to practise, and what to hope for. May we indeed deny iniquity, live godly, and look for the blessed hope of Christ's second coming without sin unto salvation. Let the light of this salvation shine on them who sit in darkness; may the Lord God give them light, that they become true worshippers, and bind their sacrifices with cords to the horns of that altar which gives value and acceptance to any offering presented on it. Exceed all our supplications in the Beloved. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXX. 14.

SCRIPTURE—EZEKIEL XVII.

REMARKS.

The prophet was directed to put forth a riddle, an enigma, a dark problem, which, when explained, strikes the mind with the truth which it contains. The riddle, or parable, is put into the mouth of the prophet, and he has only to propound it. The mind of God is thus delivered to Israel to engage the attention and impress the heart. The parable shows,

1. The position in which Israel stood.

'A great cage—came—and took,' ver. 3. The

king of Babylon, for his ambition and rapacity, is like the soaring eagle, a bird of prey. The eagle had 'great wings, was long-winged, and full of feathers,' (ver. 3.); the means of accomplishing its object. By means of these wings its movements towards its prey were rapid, and powerful, and terrific. The king of Babylon possessed vast dominions and many people, which made him a formidable enemy. The eagle came to Lebanon, and cropped off the top of the young twigs of the cedar, and carried it into a city of merchants, ver. 4. The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and carried away the king Jehoiachin and his princes, ver. 12. This he did of his ambition, and the Lord permitted him because of Israel's sin, 2 Kings xxiv. 15. The eagle also 'took of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field,' ver. 5, 6. The king of Babylon took Mattaniah the king's seed, called him Zedekiah, made him king, made a covenant with him, and confirmed it by the sanction of an oath, ver. 13. The kingdom of Israel was thus made tributary to the proud king of Babylon. 'Yet by keeping the covenant it might stand,' (ver. 14.); and it might have enjoyed many privileges and much happiness.

2. The conduct of Israel in these circumstances.

'Another great eagle,' ver. 7. He also was very formidable. The vine 'did bend her roots, and shot forth her branches toward him.' The king of Israel sent 'ambassadors to Egypt,' (ver. 15.); violated the treaty with the king of Babylon, and in doing so 'despised the oath,' ver. 18; 2 Kings xxiv. 20. He thus sinned against God. It was his oath which he despised, his covenant which he brake, ver. 19. The breach of a promise, or oath, by a nation or individuals, is sin against God. In turning to Egypt he forsook God, and trusted in worldly dependencies for help.

3. The consequent judgments on Israel.

'Shall it prosper?' ver. 9. If we know any thing of God, of his righteousness, of his conduct, of the fate of sinful men and nations, we must see that neither Israel, nor any other nation or individual guilty of such treachery, can prosper. The king of Babylon could pull up the roots of the vine 'without much people or great power,' ver. 9. Then the vine would wither in all its leaves and fruit. We, and all our prosperity, must wither if we are turning to the world, and violating the covenant of our God. 'Pharaoh shall not make for him in the war,' ver. 17. How weak is the instrument and unwilling, when God is not with him! How vain are all the schemes which are at variance with God, his righteousness, and glory! 'God will recompense his oath,' ver. 19, 20. It is an evil and a bitter thing to depart from God and his righteousness.

4. Yet great mercy to Israel.

What is formerly done in judgment is now done in mercy. 'I will also take of the highest branch of the cedar,' ver. 22. Greatness and abasement are wonderfully blended in the Messiah, the spiritual King of Israel. 'The highest branch, and a twig, a tender one,' ver. 22. This vine is planted 'in the mountain of the height of Israel'—the church of the living God. It puts forth boughs, and bears fruit, and believers sit under its shadow with great delight.

This is pre-eminently the work of God. 'I will also take,' &c. The Son given, the Child born, is the mighty God. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. 'Mercy shall be built, said I.'

5. Learn from the whole subject,

The sin and misery of idolatry; that God overrules the ambition of great kings for judgment; the wickedness of the disregard of promises, treaties, and oaths, in individuals or nations; the vanity of the expediency of worldly wisdom, turning to Egypt; the work of God, in planting Christ and his church, will prosper gloriously; 'the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.'

PRAYER.

We come with the deepest self-abasement, and prostration of our souls, into thy presence, O our God. We have sinned against thee exceedingly, and done dishonour to thy holy name. All our sinfulness in conduct has proceeded from our hearts. How deceitful and desperately wicked are they! And there is more wickedness in our hearts than has ever appeared in action. Thou hast kept us back from much sin, into which our lusts, our pride, our selfishness, our covetousness, our enmity, and our unbelief, would have plunged us. Evils past numbering compass us about. Yet, blessed ever be thy holy name, we are encouraged to pray. God be merciful to us sinners. Pardon our iniquity, for it is very great. Create in us a clean heart, renew in us a right spirit. We flee to thee to cover us. Clothe us with the robe of righteousness, the garment of salvation. Reconcile us to thee through the death of thy Son; and enable us to say, in faith and love, Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength. O do thou form, and maintain, and increase in us all the graces of the Holy Ghost, all the parts of the Christian temper. Write thy law in our hearts, and put thy statutes into our inward parts, and then our obedience to thy law will be natural, certain, and constant. The character of our inner man being moulded and formed according to the principles of holiness, the conduct of our outer man shall be framed in truth and in righteousness. Leave us not to be, like Israel, unfaithful to our promises and our vows, and to violate the oath of thee our God. Let us not transgress thy covenant, or turn to Egypt for help. Adored be thy name, thou hast not permitted our fierce enemy to rule over us. Thou hast not afflicted us according to our sin. But delay of judgment is not pardon of sin; the suspension of the curse is not peace with God. We feel that there is in us an evil heart of unbelief, which departs from thee the living God, and we have been perfidious in thy holy covenant. O let not our sin work thy wrath against us. We cannot expect that thou wilt continue to

cause the light of prosperity to shine upon us if we continue to transgress thine oath, and turn to Egypt, and forsake thee our God. Thou hast many means, ready and powerful, by which thou canst turn our prosperous state into mourning. In the day of thy east wind do thou stay thy rough wind. In the midst of deserved wrath, remember mercy. Behold, O God, our shield, and look on the face of thine Anointed. Behold us in Christ with a pleasant countenance. Uphold our goings, that our footsteps may not slip. Keep us as the apple of thine eye, and in the hollow of thine hand. Wilt not thou, who saved our souls from death, keep our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling, and enable us to walk before thee in the land of the living. Have mercy on the afflicted; know their souls in their adversity; make their bed in their sickness; and purify them in the furnace as gold seven times purified. Spare useful lives, and prepare the dying for entering into the world of spirits. Give Christ actually, according to the promise, to be the light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel. Upon them who sit in darkness let light arise. Let thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LVI. 4.

SCRIPTURE—TITUS III.

REMARKS.

The gospel, as it is a gracious, so it is a practical system. Through the gospel the law is written on the heart; and when a man thus becomes righteous in principle, he will naturally and necessarily be righteous in action. Ministers, in treating of the doctrines of the word of God, and the people in hearing it, therefore, ought to be careful that it fail not of its proper practical uses.

1. The conduct required by the word of God, ver. 1, 2. 'Put them in mind to be subject to principalities,' &c. The civil magistracy is the ordinance of God; it is an appointment of great importance; the discharge of its duties requires high principle and great faithfulness; and men owe to it extensive and constant obedience, Rom. xiii. 1—4; 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. It is our duty not only to be submissive in all things not forbidden by the word of God, but to support the government, by giving a portion of our goods in the shape of taxes. It is our duty to contribute to the support of the government which affords us protection in such a variety of important respects. The Christians in Crete were required to be subject to heathen magistrates. 'Ready to every good work.' The state of society, the times in which

we live, the church and the law of God, require the performance of many good works. The Christian should, from inward principle, ardent zeal, benevolence to man, be ready to perform good works. And there should be a comprehensiveness in his service—'Every good work;' 'Speak evil of no man.' Not only is the thing, which it would be a violation of truth to state, and an injury to one's name and usefulness, not to be spoken, but we ought not to propagate evil, even in truth, except when duty calls for it. 'No brawlers, but gentle.' Not quarrelsome, not litigious, not apt to give railing for railing, but cultivating a mild and gentle temper of mind; and by such conduct we will often gain our brother.

2. We are taught forbearance and hope in regard to unbelievers, from the former and present state of believers, ver. 3; the former state of Paul, Titus, and all believers. They were 'sometimes,' i.e. in their unconverted state, 'foolish.' Ignorant of the word of God, destitute of true wisdom, pursuing conduct naturally proceeding from such a state of heart. 'Disobedient.' The heart, being opposed to the law, will transgress the law of God. 'Deceived' by their own heart, and satan, they were 'serving divers lusts and passions,' and were willing slaves. Living in malice 'to all,' 'and envy' of the prosperous, they were 'hateful' in the view of God, 'and hating one another.' What a fearful character, what an awful view, of the world of unconverted men which lieth in the wicked one! It is, then, surely the duty of believers, who themselves were once in this state, to bear with men in an unrenowned state, to pity them, to pray for them, and to hope concerning them.

3. The provision of the God of mercy and love for accomplishing this blessed change, ver. 4—7. The arrangements of love, the admirable provisions of the new covenant, are made to 'appear' in Christ, and in the word, and become effectual when, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, they are made to appear to the soul. The awakened sinner then renounces human 'works of righteousness.' The source of this blessed change is mercy. 'According to his mercy,' &c., rich, free, mighty, immutable mercy, God saves the sinner. The manner—'By the washing of regeneration,' a spiritual birth, a new nature. As there is a change of heart, so there is a change of state, 'being justified by his grace.' The sinner is restored to the favour and to the image of God. The agent—'The Holy Ghost,' according to the constitution of the covenant of grace, applies the salvation. The channel—'Through Jesus Christ our Saviour,' the channel through which grace flows from God to man, and man approaches to God. The result—'Made heirs according to the hope of eternal life, and 'saved.' What a prospect!

4. The great duty of applying these means incessantly, that the end may be accomplished, ver. 8. The same means, accompanied by the same agency, will produce the same results. The faithful word, applied by the Holy Ghost, brought the early Christians to faith, justification, sanctification, and 'good works,' and preparation to salvation. The same results have arisen from the same means in past ages; so shall it be, in all ages to come, till the end of time. And so let it be. Amen.

PRAYER.

Thou, O God, art the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God. We confess that we have been rebels against thee our God, and injurious to our fellow-men. Woe is unto us, for we have sinned. We have been foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and passions, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. The sanctions of the law are set to guard the precepts; if the precepts are violated, the sanctions must be borne. We have times without number transgressed all the precepts of the law, and, therefore, we are under its fearful curse; as it is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them. This curse we cannot avert by any deeds or sacrifices of our own. We cannot, by any works of righteousness of ours, obey the precept, much less can we expiate our guilt, and turn away the curse. Our case is helpless; in our hands it is desperate. Our destruction is, for all that we can accomplish, remediless. Wrath has gone out against us. Adored be thine ever blessed name, thou hast made thy love and kindness appear in Christ, and in thy word. According to thy mercy, which is rich, free, sovereign, mighty, immutable, eternal, thou hast provided salvation. Infinite mercy has found for itself an infinite expression; infinite mercy in God has provided an infinite sacrifice in Christ. Through the channel of his most blessed mediation, pour out the influences of the Holy Ghost upon us, and impart the blessings of the new covenant to us. Wash us by the washing of regeneration, and justify us truly by thy grace. Constitute us thy redeemed children, put us into their state by adoption, and form in us their nature by regeneration, and thus make us the heirs of the hope of eternal life. Make us faithful in all the relations of life, zealous for the advancement of thy glory in the earth, living epistles of Christ, seen and read of all men. Believing the testimony of thy holy word, may we be careful to maintain good works. Help us, through grace, to be faithful unto death, that we may receive a crown of life. Cause men to press into thy kingdom, to strive to enter in at the strait gate, and to walk in the narrow way which leadeth unto life. Do thou add to the church, day by day, such sinners as shall be saved; and make them a people which, in time past, have not been a people. On all the glory of Zion do thou create a defence. Be a wall of fire around Zion, and the glory in the midst of her. We commit ourselves to the guar-

dianship of thy gracious providence during the approaching hours of sleep. O thou who keepest Israel, who slumberest not nor sleepest, grant us refreshing rest, even the sleep which thou givest to thy beloved people. May we commune with our hearts on our beds. May we lie down and take quiet rest, because thou causest us to dwell in safety; and whatever time we awake, may we still be with thee. Do more for us than we are able to ask or think of, in Christ, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXVI. 7.

SCRIPTURE—EZEKIEL XVIII.

REMARKS.

'God is love.' His providence must be not only equitable, but benevolent; hence the psalmist says, 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.' Yet an objection is often made to the justice of the divine government, founded on the common occurrence, that in temporal judgments the innocent suffer equally with the guilty; and that, if such judgments be prolonged, the children are punished for the sin of their parents. The Jews had now, for several years, been captives in Babylon. Aware that exile was the punishment denounced against idolatry by every messenger of God, from Moses downward, and had been inflicted on the remnant of their nation which had survived the desolation of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion, they professed to return unto the Lord, expecting, as the immediate consequence, that they would be restored to their native land. But as their captivity still continued, they proudly expressed their impatience under the rod. They alleged that they suffered not for their own deeds, but for the sins of a former age; 'that the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' From this charge the prophet, by the command of God, delivers a solemn and satisfactory vindication. Had the Jewish captives been sincere; though afflicted, servants of God, they would undoubtedly have been addressed in the language of consolation; they would have been told the corrections of their heavenly Father proceeded not from wrath; that they are effects of love, and are designed for their good. As they were unhumiliated and unholy, the prophet is instructed to vindicate the justice of God, by referring to the procedure of the great day of judgment, when every man shall bear his own burden, when every man shall be judged according to his works. This general rule is illustrated, 1. By the example of one who has lived and died as a righteous character; without respect to his parentage, God shall render unto him eternal life. 2. By the example of an open and habitual wicked character; his personal guilt, whatever may be his parentage, shall be the ground of his final condemnation. 3. By the example of an apostate who has fallen away, after seem-

ing to be religious; he shall not be saved by his early and temporary piety, but shall perish in the sin with which he closes life. 4. By the example of an humble penitent, who, after a long career of wickedness, turns from sin unto God; he shall be accepted, and all his transgressions shall not be punished, shall not even be mentioned at the day of judgment.

What is the reason, it may be asked, of such unmerited mercy? Listen to the gracious language of God himself: 'Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, and not that he should return from his ways and live? Hence the encouragement to repentance given to the Jews in captivity, and to sinners of every age. 'Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin; make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die?'

Note. Religion gives no countenance to sloth; and God here speaks as if repentance depended entirely on human strength. It is the fundamental principle of the gospel, that salvation, from first to last, is not of works, but of grace. This doctrine, however, is often abused, so as to represent a sinner, in his natural state, rather as unfortunate than criminal, and to supersede all exertions on his part in the use of means. The bible does not explain how diligence on the part of man unites with assistance from the Spirit of God; but it asserts the reality and the constancy of that union. It is our duty, as well as our privilege, to repent. We are commanded 'to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in us to will and to do.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, we desire to appear in thy presence as humble suppliants, confessing our sins, deprecating thy wrath, and imploring thine unmerited mercy. We acknowledge that we are less than the least of thy mercies; that as we were at first born in sin and conceived in iniquity, so as thou hast been adding to the number of our days, we have increased the multitude of our offences. But we rejoice, O Lord, that though in ourselves we are sinful and polluted, though we are unworthy to lift up our hands and eyes to heaven, thou hast regarded our lost estate, laid our help on him who is mighty to save, and sent down from heaven the Son of thy love, not, as our guilty fears might have suspected, to condemn the world, but as a Messenger of peace and reconciliation, to assure us of the mercy of heaven, and to make way for the exercise of such distinguished mercy by assuming our nature, by suffering in our stead, and by his obedience unto death, purchasing for us eternal life. Open, O God, the eyes of our understandings, that in the cross of Christ we may see the wonders of redeeming love. May we esteem it a faithful saying, highly credible in its nature, and on our part worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came

into this world to save sinners. May we count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus; and may it be our main concern how to win Christ, that when we come to die, we may be found in him, clothed with his righteousness, and heirs of his salvation. We pray for all our brethren of mankind. May all our fellow-men be fellow Christians; and may they who are already Christians in name, be also Christians in nature. Accept of our united thanks for thy goodness in sparing us through the last night, and raising us up in health and comfort to see the light of another day. Fit us for all its duties, and trials, and events. And after doing and enduring thy will on earth, may we at last enter into that rest which remains in heaven for the people of God. Gracious God, pardon all our sins, and hear in heaven these our humble prayers, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CL. 5.

SCRIPTURE—PHILEMON.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Of the apostolic epistles most are addressed to Christian societies, two to pastors of churches, and one to a private member. Philemon was an inhabitant of Colosse, distinguished by his affluence, piety, and usefulness. He had a 'church in his house,' and granted the use of his mansion to the Colossian converts, when they had no public building for religious purposes. His door was always open for the reception of the faithful, and by his hospitality he had often 'refreshed the bowels of the saints.' One of Philemon's slaves, for domestic slavery was then universal, was Onesimus, who was an ungodly man, though living in a pious family. There is no good reason to say that he had robbed his master; but he deserted his service, and fled to Rome, expecting to avoid detection in the crowded and varied population of the metropolis of the world. At this time St Paul was a prisoner in that city; and Onesimus, without friends, and without resource, being reduced to distress, applied to the apostle, having witnessed his wisdom and benevolence in his master's house at Colosse. The result of this application was the conversion of Onesimus, which was followed by its proper and usual fruit, confession of sin, and amendment of life. He acknowledged to the apostle that he was a runaway slave, and professed his wish to repair the wrong by returning to his former master. St Paul, though sensible of the kind services rendered to him by Onesimus, yet aware that Philemon had a prior claim, cheerfully agreed to send him back with this commendatory letter, in which, with much warmth of affection, he urges that the penitent should be pardoned for his fault, and honoured as a Christian. The sequel of the history is, that Onesi-

mus was graciously received by Philemon; that his worth was soon generally felt in the church; that, having entered into the ministry, he was the successor of Timothy at Ephesus; and that he at last finished his course by suffering martyrdom at Rome.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Although the epistle to Philemon relates only to domestic affairs, yet it furnishes a pleasing and profitable illustration of the powerful influence which true religion has on the duties of social life. 1. It is good for servants to live in a pious family. Onesimus, besides witnessing the order of Philemon's house, had heard St Paul conducting the offices of public and family worship. He enjoyed that high privilege probably without immediate advantage; but an impression was made on his mind which ultimately produced fruit, and which led him to consult the apostle in the time of distress. 2. A religious servant is 'profitable' to his master. An irreligious person serves from worldly motives, and will be overcome by worldly temptations; but a pious character has an additional safeguard of fidelity. Onesimus, after conversion, is anxious to repair former wrong. Joseph, while a slave in Potiphar's house, retains his integrity from the power of religion, declaring, in the face of powerful temptation, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' 3. Religion does not exempt from obedience to lawful authority. Slavery is inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity; yet it was established by the laws of the Roman empire. Onesimus' return to his former servitude is sanctioned by St Paul; who thus showed that Christians, for conscience sake, should be 'subject to the powers that be,' whether supreme or subordinate. 4. Religion confers true dignity. Onesimus, though, in the estimation of the world, a degraded slave, is regarded by the apostle as a 'dear son,' and is recommended to the wealthy Philemon as 'more than a servant,' 'as a brother beloved.' Still higher honours have the saints, for they are adopted into the family of heaven, are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we desire to close the day, and the week, with offering up our humble tribute of thanksgiving for all that goodness and mercy which thou hast made to pass before us. Thou art our great Creator, our constant Preserver, and bountiful Benefactor. To thee we are indebted for the form and fashion of our bodies; for the nobler powers and faculties of our souls; for every comfort that we enjoy in a present life; and for the better things that we look for beyond death and the grave. For thou hast not limited our views to this short and transitory scene; but, by the death and resurrection of thy beloved Son, hast brought life and immortality to light; and hast assured us, that they who fall asleep in Jesus shall at death pass into a state of blessedness, large as their wishes, and lasting as

eternity. Help us all, O God, to live worthy of our Christian privileges, and of our Christian hopes. May we labour less for the bread which perisheth, and more for that which endureth to everlasting life. May we regard the salvation of our souls not as a secondary, but as a primary concern. May we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, that all other things may be added thereto. May we lay up treasure in heaven, which moth and rust do not corrupt, which thieves break not through to steal, that when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, we may have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. With ourselves, O God, we pray for all mankind; we pray for their spiritual and eternal welfare. May the whole world know that God so loved it as to send his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Look down in mercy on the sick and the distressed. Sanctify affliction wherever it is sent. Supply the wants of the poor and needy. Spare young and useful lives for farther usefulness. And, Lord, be with the dying, and fit and prepare them for death, and for its awful consequences, judgment and eternity. Pour down thy Spirit and blessing on this house and family. Bless the heads of it, and make them blessings to one another. Bless the children; may they be all children of the promise, and heirs of the grace of God. Bless the servants; may they be faithful and conscientious, not with eye-service, pleasing men, but remembering that we have all a great Master in heaven, to whom we must give account. We thankfully acknowledge thy goodness through the past day and the past week. Pardon wherein we have offended thee, or come short of our duty. Take us under thy care and watchful providence during this night; and if it be thy will to spare us to see the light of another day, prepare us for the solemn duties of the ensuing sabbath. We put our whole trust and confidence in thee our God. Never leave us, never forsake us. Be our God and our guide, our guardian and our friend, in every step of our pilgrimage on earth; and when our course is finished, may we at last all see the salvation of God. These our prayers we now present to thee, in the name of Jesus, thy Son, and our Saviour. Amen.

FORTY-FOURTH WEEK.**SABBATH MORNING.**

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 7.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CXIX. 97—120.

REMARKS.

This passage shows the high estimation in which the psalmist held the word of God, notwithstanding the darkness of the Mosaic dispensation, and the scanty revelation enjoyed in that distant age. Our Lord commands us to 'search the scriptures,' (John v. 39.) adding two reasons for studying them with care; they contain the words of eternal life, and they acquaint us with the character of our divine Redeemer. By the scriptures, we are here to understand the writings of the Old Testament, for no part of the New was then composed. The language of Christ therefore intimates, that the Jewish scriptures not only contain obscure allusions to the gospel, but furnish precise information about the way to salvation. In an interview with the disciples, after his resurrection from the dead, our Saviour, referring to the events of his life and death, states, 'that all things must be fulfilled which were written concerning him, in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms,' Luke xxiv. 44. We know well that the Psalms and Prophets contain many clear predictions concerning Christ. The inspired penman declares, with feelings the most rapturous, and in descriptions the most magnificent, the dignity of his nature, the excellence of his character, and the felicity of his kingdom. They represent him as David's Son and Lord; as the King of Zion, whose name shall endure for ever, and whose dominion should extend to the uttermost parts of the earth; as the Deliverer of a world grievously afflicted by a spiritual usurper; invested with the hard-earned spoils of victory, 'travelling in the greatness of his strength;' as 'the Sun of righteousness' rising on a benighted world, and diffusing light, life, and joy. These, and similar revelations, were made generally to generations posterior to that of David. He had access only to a small part of the Old Testament, to the writings of Moses, and to the histories of Joshua and Judges. But though the law was only 'a shadow of good things to come;' and though the predictions of Christ, prior to the law, were few and dark; yet we find David rejoicing in the heart-felt experience of the mercy of God, and walking with confidence in the way of salvation. He celebrates the excellence of 'the law of God,' that is, of the word of God, small as the portion was that he possessed. It was his 'meditation all the day;' its truths were ever present 'to his mind, and made him' wiser 'than his enemies, and teachers, and even the ancients.' In his journey through life, he takes the word of God 'for a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path,' and was thus enabled to shun every evil way, and to advance with steady persevering steps in the path of duty; going on from grace to grace, till he appeared in Zion before God. In accounting for this enlightening and sanctifying influence of the word of God, we

must bear in mind that the psalmist partook largely of the Holy Ghost. He enjoyed not only the external instructions of scripture, but also the internal teaching of the Spirit; and probably derived from this source more light than we are apt to imagine, concerning the economy of redemption. Like Abraham, who lived at an earlier and darker period, 'he rejoiced in the day of the Son of man; he saw it afar off, and was glad.'

It is the duty of Christians to prize and to improve the great advantages which they enjoy over the Old Testament church, for they have not a part, but the whole word of God; not only Moses and the prophets, but Christ and his apostles. But the mere reading of scripture, unaccompanied by the influence of the Spirit, will not make mankind wise unto salvation. Mankind naturally are not only ignorant, but blind; and this blindness must be removed, before they can understand scriptural truth. 'For the natural man receiveth not the things of God; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned,' 1 Cor. ii. 14. Let then the reading of the bible be ever accompanied with a prayerful frame of mind, that the Spirit may bless your scriptural researches, and 'guide you into all truth.'

PRAYER.

Almighty God, we adore thee as the parent of universal nature; as the Lord of heaven and of earth; as the Father of angels and of men. We bless thee, that having made of one blood all the nations that dwell upon the face of the earth, thou hast so ordered the circumstances of our lot and life, as that we should be born in a Christian land, that we should enjoy the advantages of a religious education, and that, from our earliest years, we should have access to the scriptures of truth, which are able to make us wise unto salvation. We bless thee, that we have been familiarly acquainted with the mysteries of redeeming love; that wonderful work of God, which many prophets and patriarchs desired to see, and to hear, but were not permitted. For all the powers and faculties of our reasonable nature, and for all the expressions of thy kind paternal providence which we have received in the course of our lives, we desire to offer up our humble tribute of thanksgiving. But more especially would we bless thee for that unmerited, unparalleled grace which thou hast displayed in our redemption; in sending down from heaven the Son of thy love to suffer, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. May it never, O God, be our condemnation, that light has come unto the world, and that the light of the gospel has shone in our land; and that we love darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil. Open the eyes of our understanding, that we may understand the scriptures. Convince us of sin, by the effectual operation of

thy Holy Spirit. Convince us not only of our sinful life, but of our sinful nature. Enlighten our minds in the knowledge of Christ, that we may appreciate his excellence, and appropriate his blessings. And having received Christ Jesus the Lord, may we walk in him; may we be enabled to show our relationship to Christ, and our interest in his atoning blood, by a growing resemblance to his divine image, and a growing obedience to his holy will; by having our fruit more and more unto holiness, that our end may be everlasting life. With ourselves, O God, we would pray for all men; and on this, the morning of thy sabbath, we would pray for their spiritual welfare and prosperity; that the interests of pure and undefiled religion may flourish; that wherever the gospel is this day preached, it may be accompanied with power, and be the effectual means of opening the eyes of mankind; of turning them from darkness to light, and from the power Satan to the service of God. We thankfully acknowledge thy goodness, in sparing us through the last night, and in permitting us to see the light and comforts of a new morning, and of a new sabbath. Fit and prepare us for the various duties of thy day. Go up with us to thy house of prayer. Help us to worship thee, who art a Spirit, in spirit and truth. May we receive the truth in the love of it. May we lay it up in our hearts, practise it in our lives. Most gracious God, we commit ourselves, and all our interests, into thy hand. Be thou our God through life, our guide till death, and at last our portion for evermore. Father of mercies, pardon all our sins, and do for us more abundantly than we can ask or think, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXV. 8.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CXIX. 121—144.

REMARKS.

The psalmist continues to detail the advantages resulting from studying the word of God, expresses his cordial attachment to it, and asks heavenly aid that he might be able to keep it. His reflections are so plain as to require no illustration, but they are so detached as to make it difficult to present a connected view of them. A few remarks may be made on their general bearing and tendency. They show, 1. The devotional spirit of the psalmist. There is an unhappy tendency in human nature to forget God. Wicked and worldly characters give full scope to that bias, by allowing the things of the world to engross their time and their thoughts. The psalmist looks be-

yond the world, and habitually realizes the presence and perfections of God. In the sunshine of prosperity, as well as in the gloom of affliction, when busy with the labours of the day, or when wakeful in the silence of the night, 'he sets the Lord always before him.' 2. The psalmist followed up the reading of scripture with meditation. The food that we eat is of no use, except it be digested; neither will the word of God, the bread of life, be profitable to ourselves, unless we meditate upon it, and mix it with faith. The apostle Paul praises the Jews of Berea 'because they received the word with readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so;' and the result was what might have been expected from such a hopeful exercise; a great multitude of them believed, Acts xvii. 11. 3. The Psalmist, in his experience, combined faith and practice. He examined the word of God, not to increase his stock of speculative knowledge, but to obtain practical directions for his journey through life. And such should be the course followed by every humble Christian. Our divine Saviour hath said, 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them, John xiii. 17. The apostle James gives a similar counsel. 'Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein,' that is to say, whoever carefully and continually consults the unerring rule of scripture, 'being not a forgetful hearer of the word, but a conscientious doer of the word, that man shall be blessed,' Jam. i. 25.

PRAYER.

Most gracious God, we rejoice in it as our highest honour, and as our noblest privilege, that we are permitted to approach in prayer the supreme majesty of heaven and of earth. We rejoice that thou art now in Jesus Christ reconciling a guilty world to thyself, and not imputing to mankind their trespasses. We rejoice that now is the accepted time, that now is the day of salvation. Lord, teach us highly to value the advantages of grace and salvation which we now enjoy. In this, the day of our merciful visitation, while we are spared in the land of the living, and in the place of hope; while we have access to the means of grace, and to the offers of salvation; in this our day of mercy may we seek the things that belong to our eternal peace, ere they be for ever hid from our eyes. Awaken us all to a serious concern for our welfare in eternity. Help us to mind the one thing needful. Whatever else in this vain and perishing world thou art pleased either to grant or to deny, deny us not thy grace. Help us to gain an interest in Christ, and to find that better part, that part shall never be taken from us. May we never be foolish enough to attempt establishing a righteousness of our own, but may we cheerfully and gratefully submit ourselves to the righteousness of God. Under a deep sense of our unworthiness and guilt, we would place all

our hopes of mercy, and all our pleas for salvation, upon the atoning blood of thy beloved Son. May we experience the blessedness of that man whose sin is covered, whose transgression is forgiven, and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. And may we ever live as becomes them who are redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of the living God, and who are raised to the hope of glory, honour, and immortality beyond death and the grave. With ourselves, O God, we pray for all mankind. We pray especially for the cause and kingdom of Christ. Extend the boundaries of the Mediator's kingdom. Give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. We pray for the success of the gospel in our native land. May grace, mercy, and peace, be upon all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. We pray especially for that worshipping society with which we are connected, and beseech thee to follow with thy blessing the religious exercises in which we have this day been engaged. Bless the word spoken. May the entrance of thy word give light, and life, and joy; and in our future pilgrimage, amid the snares and dangers of an evil world, may we take thy word to be a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths. May we run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the majesty on high. Accept of our united thanks for thy goodness through the day. Take us under thy watchful providence through the silent watches of the night. May we lie down in thy fear. May we rise in thy favour. May we be at all times safe under the protection of the Almighty. And all that we ask is in the name, and as the disciples, of Jesus Christ. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLV. 17.

SCRIPTURE—EZEKIEL XIX.

REMARKS.

The lamentation here enjoined is narrative, not prophetic. The events alluded to had already taken place. By the mother, described as 'a lioness,' (ver. 2.), is meant the state or kingdom of Judah; and by her whelps, her kings or rulers, so Zeph. iii. 1—3. The particular prince pointed at in verse 3, is understood to be Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, whose brief history is related in 2 Kings xxiii. 30, &c.; and

the description given of him, as one who 'learned to catch the prey and devour men,' corresponds with the plainer statement, 2 Kings xxiii. 32. After a short and inglorious reign, he was taken by 'the nations in their pit, and brought in chains into the land of Egypt,' (ver. 4.), as is more circumstantially related, 2 Kings xxiii. 34.

Thus deprived of her king, Judah chose, or rather her Egyptian conqueror appointed, his brother Eliakim, now called Jehoiakim, to be king in his stead, and he was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin. From comparing the parallel passages in 2 Kings xxiv. 6, and 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6, it seems not quite clear whether it be of the father or the son that the prophet speaks, ver. 5. It would seem to be of the son, there being no doubt but he was carried captive to Babylon. Neither warned nor instructed by the misconduct or punishment of his predecessors, he followed their example, and shared their fate, ver. 6—9; all which is more plainly related in 2 Kings xxiv. 2, &c.

The remaining five verses of the chapter describe the former prosperity of Judah, under the favourite metaphor of a vine planted by the waters, fruitful, and full of branches (ver. 10.), and having powerful and prosperous princes ruling over it (ver. 11.), till, in the end, its multiplied and obstinate transgressions brought down upon it the signal judgments of God, ending in a long and humbling captivity. All this is described, in the figurative language of the prophetic writers, in ver. 12—14.

'All scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness.' The historical parts are more especially instructive, and written for our learning. The piety and virtues of good men are intended for our imitation and encouragement; the sins of the wicked for our admonition and warning. Although retributive justice may not now be so clearly discernible, in the administration of providence, as under the Jewish economy; yet a pious and attentive mind may observe many indications, that, even in the present life, it is generally 'well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked.' 'In the keeping of God's commandments there is a great present 'reward,' and experience shows, that, by the constitution of the moral world, sin and suffering are generally, perhaps invariably, though not always obviously or immediately, linked together. Our inattention, therefore, must be inexcusable, and our guilt proportional, if we overlook a lesson at once so deeply interesting and so plainly taught.

PRAYER.

Accompany with thy blessing, O Lord, the reading of thy word. We believe that whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. Teach us to read savingly and to profit. From the dispensations of thy providence, as well as the precepts of thy law, may we learn wisdom. May we remember that thou afflictest not willingly, nor grieveest the children of men; but that thou correctest for our profit, that we may be partakers of thy holiness. Let

us not then despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked of him. When thy judgments are in the earth, may we learn righteousness. Nor let us despise the riches of thy goodness, and long-suffering, and forbearance; but may thy goodness, which we so constantly and so largely experience, lead us to repentance. May thy mercies move us to present ourselves living sacrifices unto thee, which is our reasonable service, and thus may all things work together for our good. We would bless thee, above all, for thy love to the world, manifested in the incarnation, sufferings, and death of thy Son. Let it not prove our condemnation that he came to seek and save that which was lost, and yet that we despised and rejected him; but may he be precious to us as he is to all that believe, and may we so receive him as to become the children of God. May all men become partakers of the like precious faith. May the light of the glorious gospel shine into those dark corners of the earth which are still full of the habitations of cruelty, and into the darkened understandings and polluted hearts of all who are alienated from thee by reason of the ignorance that is in them. May the disobedient be turned to the wisdom of the just, and thine erring and offending children to thee their Father in heaven. We pray for all whom we ought to remember before thee. Be the friend of our friends; forgive our enemies; relieve the distressed; comfort the mourner; strengthen the weak; encourage the timid; satisfy the doubting; succour the tempted; awaken the careless; turn the sinner. We thank thee for thy preserving care, for the rest and refreshment of the night, and for the light of a new day. Keep us ever mindful how deeply we are indebted to thee. May we acknowledge thee in all our ways, and then thou wilt direct our path. Fit us for the duties of the day, keep us from evil, and preserve us by thy power through faith unto salvation. Hear us for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be the praise for ever. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXXIX. 1.

SCRIPTURE—HEBREWS I.

REMARKS.

Paul is generally thought to have been the writer of this epistle. His object evidently is to show that the gospel was superior to, and intended to supersede, the dispensation of Moses. For this purpose

he begins by showing the superiority of Him by whom the gospel was introduced, ver. 1, 2. This superiority he first states absolutely, describing our Lord as being appointed heir of all things, as the agent by whom God created the world, Col. i. 16.; as being, in his own character, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, the visible image of the invisible God; as exhibiting, in a living embodied form, the several perfections which constitute the character of God, so that he could say, 'He that seeth me seeth him that sent me,' John xii. 45.; as not only originally creating, but continually upholding all things by the word of his power; and when he had by himself purged our sins, a subject to which he barely alludes here, intending to enter more fully upon it afterwards, as having sat down at the right hand of God, meaning the power and authority which he now exercises.

Having thus stated the inherent or personal glory of Christ, he goes on to show his relative greatness. By reference to several passages in their own scriptures, he proves to the Hebrews that our Lord was superior to angels, or the highest created excellence. To this he devotes the whole of this chapter from the fourth verse, thus showing the importance which he attaches to it as the ground of our reverence for our Lord as the Apostle, and of our reliance on him as the High Priest of our profession, as he more fully explains in the subsequent part of the epistle.

How fervently thankful ought we to be to God who hath sent no less a person than his own Son as the Messenger of peace and reconciliation, and is by him beseeching us to be reconciled. How reverently should we listen to him, of whom the Father said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear him.' How deeply indebted are we to him, who, though rich, and heir of all things, became poor, and had not even where to lay his head, that we might be rich. And justly may our souls magnify the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour, that he who has graciously undertaken our redemption is exalted at the right hand of God, all power in heaven and in earth being committed unto him; that his throne is for ever and for ever; that he remaineth ever the same, and that his years shall not fail; that he is as unchangeable in his purposes as in his nature, so that whom he loveth he loveth unto the end.

PRAYER.

We desire to bless thee, O Lord, for the various discoveries of thy being, perfections, and government, made to the world; but above all, that thou who, in times past, spakest to the fathers by the prophets, hast in these later ages spoken unto us by thy Son. We would thank thee that he appeared as the only begotten of the Father, full alike of grace and truth; that in him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge; and that out of his fullness he so freely communicated to the world, having spoken as never man spake, and given an example of having fulfilled all righteousness. We bless thee

that he came not only as the light of the world, but also by himself to purge our sins, and by one offering of himself to perfect for ever them that are sanctified. We would rejoice that, having suffered for the offences of his people, he rose again for their justification, and is now set down at the right hand of God, exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins; that he is Head over all things to the church; that his throne is for ever; and that he is ever the same, without variableness or shadow of change. We have reason to acknowledge that we have not received his instructions with that reverence, nor observed his example with that care, nor embraced his atonement with that thankfulness, nor bowed to his authority with that submission, which are so justly due. Pity, O God, our blindness to our own best interests. Pardon our perverseness in thus despising our own mercies, and rejecting the counsel of God against our own souls. Save us from slighting so great a Teacher, so perfect an example, so costly a sacrifice, so righteous a King; but may we humbly, thankfully, joyfully, receive him in all his offices, lest he be angry, and we perish from the way. Extend the blessings of the gospel to all lands. May that kingdom which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, be universally and everlastingly established. May more understandings be enlightened, and their hearts purified, by the knowledge of thee the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, whom to know is eternal life. Be merciful to this place with which we are more immediately connected. Pity those who are far from thee, who desire not the knowledge of thy ways, or who, professing to know thee, in works deny thee. May thy truth and love pierce and soften their hearts, so as to make them willing and obedient. Strengthen, stablish, settle, all who love thy name. May they adorn the doctrine they profess, and shine as lights in the world. Preserve the young from being enticed by the error of the wicked. Prepare the aged and the dying for their change. Keep us all mindful that it is appointed for all men once to die, and that after death there is the judgment. We thank thee that thou hast added another day to our lives, and for what of thy goodness we have experienced. With all thine other givings, give us, we pray thee, grateful and affectionate hearts. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse us, O God, from secret faults, and let no sin have dominion over us. We would now commit ourselves, and all for whom we ought to pray,

to thy care, through the silence of the night. We would lay us down in peace, humbly trusting that thou wilt make us to dwell in safety. Be our guide and guardian until death, in death our support, and after death our portion for ever. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM L. 21.

SCRIPTURE—EZEKIEL XXII.

REMARKS.

In this chapter we have an enumeration of the sins of Jerusalem, termed here, as in other places, 'the bloody city,' Nah. iii. 1. The description gives a humbling and appalling view of the depravity of this favoured but faithless city. She is charged with shedding of blood, and making idols against herself; with unnatural disregard of parental affection and authority; with oppression of strangers, and vexing the fatherless and the widow; with contempt of God's holy things, and profanation of his sabbaths; with a sensuality offensively gross; with usurious exactions, and unfeeling extortion, ver. 3—12. Such an accumulation of wickedness provoked God to threaten to make 'her a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries,' ver. 4. And in ver. 18 he says 'Behold, therefore, I have smitten my hand,' &c., a figure of speech strongly expressive of astonishment and indignation at her manifold iniquities, as chap. xxi. 14. He then proceeds to expostulate with her in terms, and to denounce judgments against her, which might be expected to make the most careless think, and the stoutest tremble, ver. 14—16.

The prophet, naturally falling into his usual figurative style, speaks of Jerusalem as dross. God, by his mouth, threatens to put it into the furnace, to blow upon it in the fire of his wrath, until it should be melted in the midst thereof, and should know that he had poured out his fury upon it, ver. 17—22.

Dropping the metaphor, he resumes his complaint in language plain, pointed, and penetrating, and proceeds to charge the several classes of her inhabitants with their own peculiar and professional trespasses; her prophets with covetousness, ver. 25; her priests with profaneness, ver. 26; her princes with extortion, ver. 27; her prophets with palliating, and even pleading the authority of God for, the iniquities of those rulers, ver. 28; and the whole people of the land with robbery, injustice, and oppression, ver. 29. Having thus 'reproved them, and set their sins in order before their eyes,' he adds ver. 30, 31.

How different is our condition! Although our sins are great and many, as well as those of Jerusalem, and should therefore lead us to deep humility, unfeigned contrition, and serious apprehension of the righteous displeasure of God, yet still our comfort and joy is, that 'He hath found one to stand in the

gap before him for us, that he should not destroy us; one 'mighty to save to the uttermost even the chief of sinners, who come to God through him,' and able to save in every age and in every clime, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession.'

PRAYER.

We bless thee, O Lord, for the instructions and warnings, for the counsel and reproof of thy word. May that portion of it which has now been read prove life and spirit to our souls. Give us to behold ourselves in this glass, and let us not be of those forgetful readers or hearers who go away and straightway forget what manner of persons they are; but looking steadfastly unto this perfect law of liberty, may we continue in it, and so be blessed in our deed. May thy word and Spirit convince us of sin. When we read or hear of the offences of others, may we be led to think of our own. May each feel the plague of his own heart, and the errors of his own life, princes and rulers, prophets and priests, magistrates and subjects, parents and children, masters and servants. May we feel the evil and danger of sin, so as to confess it not merely with our mouths, but with that real contrition and sorrow which will work repentance not to be repented of. We rejoice to hear that with thee there is mercy that thou mayest be feared, that with our God there is plenteous redemption. Pardon, O God, all our sins, and let them not rise in judgment against us. Turn us, that wherein we have done wrong in time past, we may do so no more. We adore thee that, in order to give the penitent full assurance of faith, and that the heirs of promise might have strong consolation and good hope, thou hast found One to stand before thee in the breach, that thou shouldst not destroy them. May we be found in him as our covert from the storm, and hiding-place from the tempest. May his blood cleanse our souls from the guilt, and our hearts from the love of sin. We thank thee for sparing mercy. It is because we have obtained help of thee that we continue to this day. May each returning day find us wiser and better, more pure, more heavenly-minded, more kindly affectioned, more humble, meek, and patient, more watchful against temptation, and more fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. May we this day walk with thee, ever remembering that thou, God, seest us. May we behave as seeing thee who art invisible, and walk wisely in a perfect way. May thy truth have free course and be glorified. May ignorance and error, superstition and sin, in all their forms, be destroyed by the breath of thy mouth and the brightness of thy coming, and may thy reasonable creatures every where offer thee a

reasonable service. Be merciful to all according to their need. Bind up the broken hearted; give liberty to the captives, the opening of the prison door to them that are bound; enlighten the ignorant; reclaim the erring; confirm the wavering; and say to the faint hearted, Be strong. Hear us in these our prayers, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXVI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—HEBREWS II.

REMARKS.

'Therefore,' i.e. because Christ is a being of such unequalled dignity and authority, 'we ought to give the more earnest heed,' &c.; for if the word spoken by angels, meaning the law of Moses, Gal. iii. 19, was steadfast, &c., how shall we escape if we neglect a salvation so great in itself, which was first published by Christ himself, was confirmed by those who heard him, and attested by many signs and wonders. The apostle then recurs to the comparative excellence of Christ and angels (ver. 5.), meaning, as is thought, that the ministry of angels was not employed in publishing the gospel, here termed the 'world,' or age 'to come,' and then proceeds to obviate a difficulty, which might occur, from Psalm viii., regarding the superiority of Christ over angels. He understands the psalmist to speak there not of man, because all things are not put under him (ver. 8.), but of Christ (ver. 9.), who was made lower than the angels, by taking upon him the likeness of sinful flesh, which he did, that, by the grace of God, he might suffer death for every man; and having done so, for the suffering of that death he was crowned with glory and honour, Phil. ii. 9. He then states that it became God to make Christ suffer as the Saviour of sinners, and, therefore, that it was necessary that he the Sanctifier, and they the sanctified, should be of one nature, which being the case, he is not ashamed to call them brethren, ver. 11—13.

In verse 14 he gives another reason why Christ became man, that through death he might destroy, &c. This spirit, called the accuser of the brethren, might demand the punishment of man from the justice, holiness, and truth of God. He might say, If thou art just, punish man, for he too has rebelled; if thou art holy, cast man off, for he is polluted; if thou art true, man must die, for thou saidst, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' In this sense he may be said to have had the power of death; but our Lord, by his death, has destroyed this plea and power, hence Col. ii. 15.; he has overcome the accuser by the blood of the Lamb, Rev. xii. 10, 11, and so delivered them who through fear of death, &c., ver. 15.

In verse 17 he assigns a further reason why Christ was made like unto his brethren, that in administering the government of God he might be merciful

and faithful, i. e. entitled to the fullest and most entire confidence on our part, because having himself been tempted as we are, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

If they who trespassed against the law of Moses died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall we be thought worthy if we trample under foot the Son of God? See then that ye refuse not him that speaketh. How wonderful the grace of Christ, who took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham! who had a body prepared for him, that he might have somewhat to offer, and suffer death for every man. And how joyful is it to know, that for the suffering of this death he is crowned with glory and honour, God having highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that he has destroyed him that had the power of death; and that, in administering the things pertaining to God, he is merciful, and entitled to the most reposing confidence, and most assured reliance of his followers, since he can be touched with a feeling of their infirmities, and strengthen them according to their need.

PRAYER.

Dispose us, O God, to give earnest heed to thy word, as to a light that shineth in a dark place. May we receive it into a good and honest heart, reverencing it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which worketh effectually in them that believe. May it dwell richly in us in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, enlightening our minds, rejoicing our hearts, converting our souls, and making us wise unto salvation. May the authority of Christ awe us, and his love constrain us, to listen reverently, obey unreservedly, and rely implicitly. We adore thee that he who was in the form of God humbled himself, and was found in fashion as a man; that by his death he has destroyed him that had the power of death, and given the victory to as many as receive him; that having conquered, he has ascended most gloriously far above all heavens, that he might fulfil all things, and can still be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Having such a High Priest over the house of God, we would draw near thee with humble confidence to obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need. May we love thee who first so loved us. May we love him who gave himself for us, to wash us from our sins, and redeem us to God by his own blood. May our love abound in knowledge and in all judgment, that being rooted and grounded in it, we may walk in love, and be followers of thee as dear children. May that gospel which breathes not the spirit of bondage unto fear, but the spirit of power, love, and of a sound mind, reach every land, and gladden every heart. Hasten the time when, in this sense, the wilderness and the solitary

place shall be glad, when the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, when man shall be blessed in Christ, and call him blessed. Remember us of this place with that favour which thou bearest to thine own. Visit us with thy salvation, that we may see the good of thy chosen, and rejoice in the gladness of thy nation. May all of every rank and age fear thee and thy goodness, and remember that blessed is that people whose God is the Lord. Enrich us with the wisdom that is from above. We thank thee for the mercies of this day. Thou givest liberally, and upbraidest not. May we ever feel that we are thine. Pardon, O God, our errors and imperfections. What we know not in this respect, do thou teach us; and when we have done wrong in time past, enable us to do so no more. Be with us, and with all in whom we are interested, in our lying down and our rising up, in our going out and our coming in. Show us thy way, teach us thy path, and keep us, soul, body, and spirit, unto the coming of Christ. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXVIII. 5.

SCRIPTURE—EZEKIEL XXXIII.

REMARKS.

It will contribute to a clearer understanding of this chapter if the reader peruse at the same time the 36th chapter of 2 Chron. Jerusalem, we learn, was left standing for nearly twelve years from the date of the seventy years' captivity. The inhabitants of that city, and of Judea, instead of availing themselves of this period of measured and suspended judgment, to return with godly sorrow and repentance to their God, only 'increased their transgression and mocked the messengers of God, till wrath arose, and there was no remedy.' Instead of being surprised at this conduct of the Jews, we should remember that it is but an exemplification of a lamentable fact common to every age, viz. that chastisement and forbearance are alike lost on unhumiliated sinners. When 'hardly bested,' they only fret themselves, curse men and God, and look upward, Isaiah viii. 21.

Of the destruction of Jerusalem, the prophet is informed by a fugitive, ver. 21. For some time previous to that, the Lord had ceased to speak by the prophet; but had made him in his own person a sign, by enjoining him not to mourn or weep when the desire of his eyes was taken away with a stroke; and by making him dumb, until he should be informed of the destruction of the city, when his mouth should be opened, chapter xxiv. By no judgment does God more fearfully display his anger against a people, than by refusing to hear the intercessions of his servants, who sigh for prevailing abominations, and

making them dumb, that 'they should not be reprovers to a rebellious house,' chap. iii. 28. It then becomes manifest, that God's spirit has ceased to strive with sinners; and that 'the peace and safety' from which they derive courage, are only the forerunners of sudden destruction by temporal calamities.

'On the evening afore he that had escaped from the city arrived, the hand of the Lord, or the prophetic inspiration, was upon the prophet.' He is reminded of his responsibility as a watchman, his mouth is opened, and he is no more dumb, but a reprover. As Jerusalem is by this time destroyed; the coming sword of which he is set up to give warning, refers, we think, to the subsequent judgments which were to overtake those who now considered themselves safe in the wastes, the forts, and the fields of Judea. 'They said Abraham was one, and yet he sojourned safely in the land, but we are many,' ver. 24. They forgot that Abraham's safety lay not in his sword, but in his God, who was his shield and exceeding great reward; and that their enemies were not the Babylonians, but their evil hearts and transgressions. The prophet takes not up a lamentation; weeps not for the destruction of Jerusalem, the desire of their eyes, but winds a blast of warning, ver. 25—29. The prophet asserts the desire of God, that sinners should turn and live; but he asserts his holiness also, which treats men according to their character; and that a sinner will not be spared for bygone righteousness, nor a penitent rejected on account of past sins. There need be no fear that the truth which makes God deal with men according to their character, will jar with the doctrine of righteousness by faith. Nor is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, which is but the declaration that saints are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, contradicted by the expression of the 'righteous turning from his righteousness.' Besides, there is a standard of character which secures temporal prosperity, and which yet falls short of a qualification for heaven. When Nineveh repented, and Ahab humbled himself, judgment was averted for a time; and their case was made a confirmation of the truth that God has no pleasure in the death of the sinner. But sinners always wish to exhibit God's word as full of self-contradictions; 'saying, If our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?' ver. 10. They cavil with God's government of the world, saying his ways are not equal, when they should be mourning for sin and repenting. But such impeachments subvert not the truth; for 'wisdom is justified of her children.'

The prophet receives what seems a caution, ver. 30—33. Avidity for hearing is not to be mistaken for docility of spirit; nor approbation of a preacher for love of the truth. Popularity is neither the test of truth, nor of necessity the criterion of usefulness; but a proof that the preacher has a place, and his words an echo, in the hearts of his hearers. And there are attachments and sympathy on erroneous and bad principles, as well as on good. It is a lamentable fact, too, that those whose daily life makes void the law, relish as a lovely song, those views of truth which the real believer receives with trembling joined to his joy; that they seem to think, that expos-

ing their hearts to the searchings of God's word is tantamount to the forsaking of evil; and that multitudes are lulled into fatal repose by representations which rouse the disciple indeed to make his calling and election sure. 'Let us therefore fear,' &c. Heb. iv. 1.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, before whom our fathers walked, and in whom they trusted, and who art ever the shield and great reward of such as serve thee with a perfect heart; we now present ourselves at thy footstool, to bless thy name, and give thee honour and thanks for thy past bounty and present goodness to us as individuals, a household, and a people. We bless thee, that thou hast been as a wall of fire around our country, our city, and our home; that we have neither been debarred from rest, nor risen to sorrow, by hearing that either has been smitten with the sword, or with the pestilence. Justly mightest thou have judged us, every one after his ways; made our land most desolate, and the pomp of our strength to cease, because of all our abominations. But we are living witnesses of thy grace, forbearance, and want of pleasure in the death of the wicked. Bless the watchmen whom thou hast counted faithful, to be set on the walls of the city of our solemnities. May they be as signs by which our Zion shall be called, sought out, a city not forsaken. May they be circumspect against sin; and feel that they are themselves as a city set upon a hill, and that many wait for their halting, talking of them by the walls and in the doors of the houses. Make them jealous for thy honour, zealous in thy truth; men who seek the things of Christ; his commendation and reward; and free alike of fearfulness in reproofing slothfulness in labour, and of shame on account of the testimony of the Lord in the afflictions of the gospel. Save them from being misled by the apparent docility of multitudes who sit as thy people sit, and hear thy words, but do them not. Far be it from us this day, to sin willfully, and to make shipwreck of faith. Wean us from whatever exercises an undue ascendancy over our hearts. May we be found all our days walking in the statutes of life without committing iniquity. May we receive grace daily now, and be received to glory hereafter, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXVIII. 5—8.

SCRIPTURE—HEBREWS III.

REMARKS.

From his course of remarks on the intrinsic and conferred glory of the Son, and from his exposition of the purposes which Christ's assumption of humanity serves in the achievement of the great salvation, the apostle now turns to point our attention more especially to the Son's apostolic and sacerdotal functions. If the transgression of the law was no venial crime, as the annals of the Jewish nation could testify, the superiority of Jesus to Moses, which stood relatively as that of the heir to the servant, must of necessity enhance the guilt of transgression under the gospel, and 'Christ is faithful in his house,' ver. 2.

The Jews were partakers of an earthly calling, Christians of an heavenly. Christ, like Moses, spoke on earth, as a minister of the circumcision; by his apostles he speaks from heaven. The calling of Christians, here described to be an honour, refers not to their being called to the inheritance of heaven, so much as to their being called by an authority now addressing them from heaven, and to which, at their peril, they must implicitly give respect as an authority superior to that of Moses. It was an honour to the Jews to have had this heavenly voice addressed first to them; and its design, wherever it may come, is to confer the same honour, by turning from sin those who receive it. Christians stand similarly situated, as to the heavenly voice, with the Jews, as to the law given by Moses. The voice of God in the law was, (Exod. xix. 3.) 'If you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be to me a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, an holy nation.' They were God's household, or temple. God was in the midst of them. The voice of Christ accords with that which we have quoted, John viii. 31, 'If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed.' 'Whose house are we,' &c. ver. 6. 'We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence,' &c. Else like them we may fail of the promised rest, 'through unbelief.'

Some Christians feel perplexed in the attempt to reconcile such statements as these, in which individual salvation seems to be made dependent on individual will and effort, with those which teach the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. We can only observe, that that doctrine is one from which no Christian is warranted to draw encouragement, unless he is actually, at the time, in possession of the testimony of his conscience, that he holds fast his profession, and that in godly sincerity he has his conversation in the world. When conscience testifies of decaying faith, increasing sloth, worldly-mindedness, a spirit of slumber, or of harboured sin; for a man to connect the doctrine of perseverance with what he once felt, with what he has done, or has been, and to thank God and take courage, is to apply the opiate of delusion to his conscience, and to shut his ears to that voice which thunders against hypocrites in

Zion. The Christian fainting in his struggle against sin, or in dread of sinking from unbelief in the water around him, can rejoice that it is not the way of God, nor of man, to begin a good and a great work, with the view of abandoning it before it is finished. The commencement and the past, become a pledge of the future. He judges of his safety, however, not by the truth of the doctrine, but by the fact of his heart being kept in the love of God; not by a faith and fervour out of date, but by a faith and dependence truly, though weakly, in exercise; and if he rejoices in the doctrine, it is with trembling in himself. The reasonableness of this solicitude he can vindicate, by a reference to the Master in whose house he is a servant, and who is gracious, but jealous also, who is of great pity, but who is faithful; and by a reference to what befel some who did provoke in former ages, and though saved out of Egypt, perished in the wilderness. Instead of considering warning as out of place, in speaking to believers, he with daily gratitude hears the word and ministers of God, saying, 'take heed, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.' As he has returned to God by repentance, he fears departing from him by sin. He deplores the remaining unbelief in his heart; but a heart of unbelief he dreads, as one not right with God, as evil, inasmuch as it robs God of his veracity, denies the infinite resources of his nature, doubts and frustrates his purpose of grace, grieves and provokes him to say, *Lo-ammi*, 'ye are not my people;' and to swear in his wrath 'that they shall not enter into his rest.' And while he suffers the word of exhortation himself, he would, while it is called to-day, pass the word of exhortation to others. Conscious of the imperceptible steps by which the heart becomes hardened, by the deceitful operation of sin, when once entertained, he would stir up himself and others to watch, knowing that he only becomes a partaker of Christ, if he continue steadfast to the end.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most gracious God, who art the builder and Creator of all things; and who of thy great mercy hast had compassion on thy sinful and erring creatures, and hast condescended to make some, in all ages, partakers of thy heavenly calling, and to dwell among them as thy household; we bless thee, that thou hast visited us from on high with that light of life which bringeth salvation to all who receive it with lowly and thankful hearts. Teach and enable us, we implore thee, to fix our ardent and reverent contemplation on Him who is the brightness of thy glory, and the Captain of our salvation, and who by one sacrifice of himself has purged our sin. As thou hast highly exalted him in honour above every name, and put all things under him, may his name and honour be precious to us above every interest, and may we make every wish and purpose subordinate to his holy will and glory. May thy love and mercy manifested in Christ,

be the only ground of our confidence, and our chiefest joy. United to Christ as our Head, may we be one in thee, O Father, and in thy Son, that we may be witnesses to the world that Christ has come from thee, and that we are of the many sons that he is bringing unto glory. Make us daily partakers of Christ, of his excellent knowledge, of his holy mind, of his spiritual gifts; and by thy power through faith, may we be kept, holding the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end. Keep us from secret faults, save us from presumptuous sins. Let us not grieve thee, as did those who saw thy work, but did always err in heart. From the deceitfulness of sin and of our evil hearts, for ever preserve us by thy good Spirit. Qualify us, by the graces of holy love and zeal, to exhort others, lest they be hardened from thy way; and in this our household may we mutually suffer the word of exhortation. Raise up in thy church faithful stewards of thy mysteries, and stir their hearts to hallowed jealousy for thy glory. We would, by prayer, constrain thee, saying, Abide with us this and every night. May the length and strength of our days be consecrated to thee; and may we be enabled at the close of life, with a hope full of immortality, to commend our spirits into thy hand. May we then sleep in Jesus, and be satisfied with thy likeness when we awake. Hear us in thy grace, we beseech thee, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLIV. 3—8.

SCRIPTURE—EZEKIEL XXXVI.

REMARKS.

The characteristic feature and end of moral discipline being to ameliorate individuals or a community with their own concurrence, it is indispensable to the success and to the credit of such a system, that the principles, according to which the awards of conduct are determined, be distinctly and universally understood, alike by the spectators of the consequences of disobedience, as by the sufferers themselves. Accordingly we find Ezekiel, in a preceding part of these prophecies, endeavouring to convince the suffering Jews of the righteousness of God's judgments, and that his ways are equal. Without a conviction of this, there could be no shame nor godly sorrow for their sins; but their feelings would rise against the government of Jehovah as if he were a tyrant oppressing them. Hence we find that one purpose of the calamities with which they were visited was, that they might know that the Lord was God. It would seem, also, that the heathen, among whom the Jews, in their captivity, were scattered, had drawn

erroneous conclusions from the dealings of God in surrendering his people to the will of their enemies. The taunts and boastful anticipations to which they gave utterance, fell as a scornful reproach on that God by whose hand the judgment had been inflicted. In these circumstances his jealousy is awakened for his own name; and, therefore, refraining from what the iniquity of his people, in other circumstances, might have warranted him in inflicting upon them, he resolved, for his name's sake, to show such marvellous kindness, by gathering them from all countries, that if the heathen misconstrued the design of his chastisements, they would find it impossible to doubt the exceeding riches of his grace, or the resources of his power. We are told that the effect of such favour extended to his people would be, 'Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate; I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it,' ver. 36.

1. Let the people of God remember, in their deepest afflictions, that if the impression made on those round about them, by the chastisements of their sins, tends to produce a mistaken opinion of the cause of these judgments, and one adverse to the character of the Lord whom they serve, he will show mercy and favour, 'not for your sakes, be it known unto you, but for his holy name's sake, saith the Lord.'

2. It is no abatement from the riches of God's grace to say that he is moved to mercy by considerations affecting his name and honour. Mercy without a reason is mere fondness. That his name is concerned in what they ask is an old and effectual argument of his servants, Exod. xxxii. 12.

3. Let not, however, God's suffering people expect deliverance from chastisement till they cordially renounce their idols and false hopes, vindicate the rectitude of God's dealings with them, lothe themselves in their own sight, and learn to serve the Lord more unreservedly than before in newness of spirit, ver. 31. This is the will of God, even their sanctification; and the reproach of the enemy will not, as in the case of feeble man, provoke the Lord to jealousy until this his will be accomplished in his people, ver. 33.

4. Does the stubborn obduracy of our will refuse to yield to the influence of God's chastisements? The case is not hopeless. Hear the promise of the new covenant, 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; a new heart also will I give you,' &c., ver. 23—28.

5. We only use God's promises aright when we begin to convert them into importunate pleas at a throne of grace. God foretells what he purposes to do for his people; but he connects the accomplishment of the promise expressly with their supplication for it. 'I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel.' How often may believers have exclaimed, 'Has the Lord forgotten his promise?' or have said, 'the time is not yet come,' when it was they who restrained that prayer which God requireth previous to his plucking his hand from his bosom on their behalf.

PRAYER.

Holy Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, we thank thee that albeit thou dwellest enthroned in light, to which we cannot approach, yet thou hast condescended to reveal thyself to us, thy rebellious children, by the inspiration of thy good Spirit, in prophets and apostles, and, above all, in thy only begotten Son, who is the brightness of thy glory, and the express image of thy person. We rejoice that in and by him we can see thee, O Father, and learn all that thou art, and all the purposes of thy love toward our wretched and guilty race. We rejoice to know that thou wilt not that any of us should perish; that even now thou afflictest us not willingly, and that the chastisement of our sins is with the view of making us partakers of thy holiness. We acknowledge that thou hast been ever righteous in all thy proceedings towards us, and that it is of thy infinite grace that we have not been consumed. Thou hast appointed us the bounds of our habitation, and the circumstances of our lot, with a view to our good and the glory of thy great name. If we have wisdom to guide our steps; if we have, day by day, the meat that perisheth; if we have power to get wealth; if we ever remembered our doings that were not good, and loathed ourselves for them; if we have yet trusted in Christ, or, as candidates for glory, honour, and immortality, exercise, however feebly, watchfulness, patience, and self-denial; and desire to follow Christ in the regeneration, we owe it all to thy grace, and would say, Not unto us, not unto us, be the praise. Be pleased to begin, and if begun, to fulfil in us the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power. Save us from self-delusion, from trusting in ourselves that we are righteous, from resting in any fancied attainment, from making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and from becoming the reproach of the foolish. May our minds be moulded after that of thy Son, may we be all taught of God, and may we feel, in our daily transformation into thine image, the verification of those promises of a new heart, and of the indwelling of thy blessed Spirit, of which we have at this time read in thy holy word. May thy promises excite in us ardent desires and unceasing prayer to become heirs of their fulfilment, and more and more partakers of that divine nature which is the evidence of our having been born from above. Be surety for thy servants for good during this and every other day. May we use the world as not abusing it; and although in the world, may we never become identified with those who are of it. As they who are in thy

house are still praising thee, may we, possessed of that peace which Christ giveth to his own, and with the testimony of our conscience to our godly sincerity, be glad in thee all our days. May we see on earth the good of thy chosen, and be guided by thy Spirit to the land of uprightness. Be pleased to grant us these blessings, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXVI. 7—11.

SCRIPTURE—HEBREWS IV.

REMARKS.

This chapter is a continuation of the line of admonition on which the apostle enters in the third chapter. He there asserts that as Moses was faithful in his house, so is Christ faithful in his own house. That the words of Moses did not fail of effect, the history of the Jews bore lamentable evidence. Years and centuries after Moses and his successors, the prophets, had been gathered to their fathers, their predictions of good or of evil were fulfilled to the letter. In Zach. i. 3, God appeals to this fact, 'Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? But did not my words take hold upon your fathers, and they said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, so hath he dealt with us?' To the same purpose the apostle cautions the Hebrews, lest they, guilty of similar contempt of the gospel of Christ, should fall after the same example of unbelief. 'Let us therefore fear,' &c.

It is not to be imagined that a Christian is actuated solely by fear, as if the word of God were designed only to hang over the heads of mankind like a drawn sword, in order to restrain them from evil. The word of God appeals certainly to our fears, but chiefly to the generous sentiments of our hearts. The Christian is animated and attached to the service of his Lord by exceeding great and precious promises. The fear of coming short of these, and of grieving the Lord and his Spirit, rather than the fear of penal infliction, is the leading motive of his conduct.

There is an abruptness in the reasoning of this chapter, which evinces the confidence of the apostle that he is speaking to minds familiar with the Old Testament scriptures. He but hints, as it were, the interpretation of statements, and the application of facts, in that volume, leaving it to his readers to pursue the application more fully themselves.

The reader must observe the course of the argument relative to the different rests. At the creation man entered into God's rest, or into a sabbatic state of being and blessedness with God. In his fallen condition man is doomed to toil, and is without rest; and although, as regarded the journey through the wilderness, Canaan was a rest to Israel, yet it could not be the rest promised by God, as David, in his day, speaks of that rest as unpossessed, and remain-

ing still to be entered. The conclusion of the apostle is, that it is only by Christ's guidance that the people of God enter into God's rest, wherein they cease from their works.

It will require likewise to be attended to in studying this chapter, that the apostle is not, at this stage of his argument, in circumstances to explain in what the true rest consists, until he opens up the priestly character of Christ, which he begins to do at the conclusion of this chapter. Having brought his remarks on that department of Christ's work to a conclusion, he speaks at large of the true rest which we enter by faith, in chap. viii. x. xii., and concludes, 'Wherefore we, receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace,' &c.

But as he had begun with admonition, he presses upon the Hebrews the necessity of labouring to enter into the true rest, that land of promise, to possess which Christ was commanding them to 'go up.' But how are we to press into the kingdom of heaven? by faith in the Captain of our salvation; by laying aside every weight (chap. xii. 1—3.); by being followers of those who are now by faith inheriting the promises, (chap. vi. 12.); and by habitual fear of failure. For we, like the Israelites, are liable to rebel and vex his Holy Spirit; to limit the Holy One of Israel; to forget past mercies; to faint and murmur at the difficulties and length of the way; to loathe the light food of common truths, and to incline to return to the flesh-pots of Egypt, or the pleasures of sin. Let us, therefore, not be slothful, but diligent to make our calling and election sure.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who art the author of life, and the inexhaustible fountain of all mercies, we bless thee for that goodness which thou didst manifest to mankind when the works were finished at the creation of the world. We with sorrow acknowledge our grievous sins, by which we have forfeited thy gracious favour, and that divine rest of blessedness and joy, passing all understanding, which was originally possessed in the enjoyment of thy fatherly love, and of filial confidence in thy holy presence. How can we worthily admire that manner of love which did triumph over the indignation and wrath which our transgressions had so justly deserved, and which has opened to us a door of return, to become thy children again by faith in Jesus Christ thy Son? When we seriously consider our past folly and sin, and think of those to whom the gospel was preached, as well as unto us, and who perished with the land of promise in their view, we would fear, though a promise is left us of entering thy rest, lest any of us should come short of it through unbelief. As thou art saying to us, To-day, if you will hear my voice, harden not your hearts; may we strive to enter in, and labour to make our calling and election sure. May we, by the indwelling of thy Spirit in our hearts, grow

daily in enlarged understanding of the unsearchable riches of thy grace; in the mortification of every sinful affection; in hatred of all envious and uncharitable thoughts; in freedom from all disturbing passions; in a more unfeigned and lively faith in things unseen and eternal; in submissive acquiescence in the appointments of thy holy will; in weaned humility of mind; and in a visible transformation into the image of thy Son. Ever defend us by thy grace from the snares which beset our path; and give us not up to the misleading influence of a world lying in iniquity, nor of those inclinations which darken our minds so that we venture on presumptuous sins. Pardon, good Lord, what thy holy eye has seen impure in our motives, or sinful in our thoughts, words, and acts, this day. When we look back on the events of this day, we have reason to fear that we have been more earnestly labouring for the things which perish in the using, than in laying up durable riches at thy right hand; and that it has been more with fleshly wisdom than under the guidance of that which is from above, that we have had our conversation in the world. Yet we would look to thee to whom all things are naked and open, and would, though with jealousy of ourselves, presume to say, in the spirit of thy servant of old, Lord, thou knowest that it is our desire to love thee and to keep thy commandments. Good Shepherd of Israel, and God of Bethel, spread thy covering wing over us, and over those whom we bear on our spirits, and over our common interests this night. Guide us through life; be with us in the valley and shadow of death; and receive us afterwards to thy glory, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM IX. 13.

SCRIPTURE—EZEKIEL XXXVIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

This prophecy conveyed a warning to the Israelites, not to expect that the deliverance mentioned in the preceding chapter would free them from all future troubles, or secure for them a perpetual peace. It very probably had its fulfilment some time after their return from captivity. By Gog, many think that Antiochus Epiphanes, one of their most violent persecutors, is meant. Magog may signify the country, or rather the people, over whom he ruled. We are told, that these enemies should invade the land of Israel from the north; the regions of which seem to have been peopled by the posterity of Magog, second

son of Japheth, who were of old generally called Scythians, their descendants in modern times, Mogul Tartars; their appearance, it is said, should be so formidable as to fill the inhabitants with consternation and terror; but an assurance is given, that they would be under divine restraint, and be ultimately defeated by the immediate hand of God.

It is observable that the names 'Gog and Magog,' which are given here to the last enemies of the Jewish church, are given also, in Rev. xx. 8, to the last enemies of the Christian church, of whom it is there foretold, that they should be utterly destroyed shortly before the *second* coming of our Lord.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Whoever Gog and Magog may have been, it is sufficient for all practical purposes, to know that they were enemies of righteousness, and of the church of God. God forewarned the Israelites, as our blessed Lord forewarned his disciples, that in this world they should have tribulation. So tender, however, is he, of his people's comfort, that he assures them beforehand, 'that he will be as a wall of fire around them,' and make all their afflictions, whatever these may be, work together for their good. As the nations, formerly at variance with each other, united in one formidable combination against the Israelites, so does it still happen with respect to the church and people of God; those join together against them who have no bond of union among themselves but that of common envy and hatred. The Israelites enjoyed but a short respite from war and captivity, when they were unexpectedly assailed by other enemies. Nor can we, while in this world, be secure from trouble, nor know always whence it may come, nor how soon. No. The Christian's house of perfect and unceasing rest, lies in scenes beyond the grave. God is indeed against the enemies of his church and people, but still he makes use of them for the advancement of his own glory, and the accomplishment of his gracious purposes, Psal. lxxvi. 10; Hab. i. 12. Although, however, he may permit them, for these ends, to go on for a time in sin, yet will he manifest, in their destruction at last, his hatred of it, and displeasure against it, and he will do so in such a manner as to show, even to themselves, the grounds of his controversy with them; and as to constrain even themselves to acknowledge that he is just when he judgeth. And since he will assuredly render vengeance to his enemies, let us lay down the weapons of our rebellion against him; let us embrace now his overtures of mercy in Christ, and be at peace; let us give glory to his name before our feet stumble on the dark mountains. And since the Bible tells us plainly, that in this world the Christian shall meet with afflictions, yea, often severe, and complicated, and unlooked for afflictions; let its precious statements and promises be treasured up in our minds, that when afflictions do come, they may find us not only forewarned to receive them, but also knowing him who can strengthen us under them, and deliver us from them.

PRAYER.

Gracious God, we approach thee at this time with deepest reverence, and in the name of Christ.

For his sake vouchsafe the unction of the Holy Spirit, that we may learn practically and singly those lessons of heavenly wisdom which every portion of thy word is fitted to convey. We bless thee, that although we were conceived in sin, and have been transgressors from the womb, and deserve nothing but to be left to perish under our deeply aggravated guilt, thou art still making overtures of peace to us in the gospel; thou art still manifesting, by thy forbearance with us, that thou hast no pleasure in our death. May we be made willing, in a day of thy power, to lay down the weapons of our rebellion, to renounce the service of sin, to take thee in Christ as our covenant God, and to surrender ourselves to thee as thy covenant people. Form us for thyself by thy grace and Spirit, that we may show forth thy praise, and thus give glory to thy name, before our feet stumble on the dark mountains. Sanctify to us thy dealings in providence, whether apparently favourable, or adverse, and grant that they may work together for thy glory in our good. Blessed be thy name, that while thou hast forewarned thy people that in this world they shall have tribulation, yet thou assurest them that thou wilt chasten them only for their profit, that they may be partakers of thy holiness, and that their light afflictions shall work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Enable us, in every hour of peril and distress, to rejoice in believing that thou sittest King on every flood; that thou wilt lay no burden upon thy people, beyond what thou wilt enable them to bear; that thou wilt glorify thyself in delivering them in the best time, and in the best way, even in thine own time, and in thine own way. We thank thee for the circumstances in which we are now permitted to compass the family altar. May our spared lives be devoted to thee, and may we know sensibly the preciousness of thy grace, which helpeth in the time of need. Be very gracious to all who are dear to us; be propitious to every interest and concern in which we should feel interested and concerned. Sanctify afflictions to the afflicted, and bereavements to the bereaved; and may we be more and more fitted by every dispensation of thy providence and grace for leaving this world of sin and sorrow, and entering into the joy of our Lord, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXII.

SCRIPTURE—HEBREWS V.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The apostle having asserted the priesthood of Christ, and shown the encouragement which believers should derive from it, begins in this chapter to explain the nature of the office, especially as to its typical meaning, ver. 1—4. And he adds, in ver. 5, that Christ had not taken this honour to himself, but like as Aaron had been appointed to it by God, so was he appointed to it by his heavenly Father. In the discharge of his priestly office, which being after the higher order of Melchizedec, was not successive and temporary, but personal and eternal, the apostle tells us, ver. 7, 'Who in the days of his flesh,' &c. 'His prayers and supplications,' &c. were expressions of the deep anguish of his holy soul in his last sufferings, and 'his being heard,' &c. may signify his being delivered from the overwhelming dread, felt by his human nature, of that wrath which, as our Surety, he had undertaken to endure, or his being carried safely through death, and revisited with the sensible presence of his heavenly Father at his resurrection. The consequences were, ver. 8, that though he was the eternal Son of God yet he learned, i. e. experimentally, as far as could consist with his sinless humanity, the difficulty of obeying the divine law, amidst the temptations and trials of this world, the agony caused by the infliction of the divine wrath, and the sustaining efficacy of the love of his heavenly Father; and, ver. 9, that by his obedience unto death, and subsequent exaltation, he became fully qualified to be the Mediator and Redeemer of all who believe in him as their only Saviour, and submit to him as their only Lord, ver. 10—14. Though the believing Hebrews had long known and professed the gospel, yet, either from the slowness of their apprehension, or from want of duly improving their privileges, they had need of being taught anew which be the first principles of the oracles of God, or of the revelations of Moses and the prophets. By milk, is to be understood the most obvious truths of Christianity; and by strong meat, its deeper and more spiritual doctrines. Those who require the former, must be considered as only babes in religion, however long they may have professed to know and believe the gospel. But the more sublime truths which were obscurely intimated in the ceremonial dispensation, were as strong meat, and fit only for such as were matured in judgment and experience, or had their spiritual senses exercised to discern good from evil, or truth from error.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

In our fallen state we cannot approach unto God, but through the intervention of a Mediator. Christ alone has been appointed to this high office, and is fully qualified for the discharge of it. And now the gospel exhibits him as the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey him. Are we of that number? We do not savingly confide in him as our great High Priest,

unless we submit cheerfully to him as our prophet, and receive his instructions with faith, and love, and practical application; and unless we, moreover, take him to be our king, to subdue the iniquity of our hearts, to govern us by his laws, and to defend and deliver us from all our enemies. God requires that we should grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, in proportion to the time and means afforded us, which time and means, if neglected or abused, will tend fearfully to aggravate our guilt, and increase our condemnation. And since there are some truths more difficult to be understood than others, we should seek to become experimentally acquainted with those that are simple first, and then proceed to such as are more deep and perplexing, which will tend greatly, under the divine blessing, to our comfort, and stability, and fruitfulness.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, cause our souls to live, that we may praise thee for all the mercy, and goodness, and truth, which thou art day by day making to pass before us. We would now set up another stone of remembrance, and call it by the name of Ebenezer, and say, Hitherto hast thou helped us. At the same time we would acknowledge, with shame and sorrow, how greatly we have forgotten thee the God who made us, and how lightly we have esteemed the Rock of our salvation. O deliver us from the fool's heart, which saith thou art not, and enable us to endure as seeing thee who art invisible. Enter not into judgment with us, but look upon us in the face of thine Anointed, and deal with us in him as thou seest our needs to require, and not as our sins deserve. We bless thee that he has been appointed by thee to the high office of Mediator, and that by his voluntary obedience unto death he magnified thy law, and satisfied thy justice, and thus wrought out a righteousness so perfect and meritorious, as to be the infallible ground of pardon, and acceptance, and eternal life, to all who rely on it by faith. May we confide implicitly in him as our great High Priest; submit cheerfully to his instructions as our Prophet, and receive him cordially as our King. Blessed be thy name, that there is milk provided by thee for those who are only babes in religion, as well as strong meat for such as are more advanced. Send forth thy Holy Spirit's light with thy truth, that we may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, in proportion to the means which are afforded us. May we yield an implicit faith to all that thou revealest, and a willing obedience to all that thou commandest. And with respect to those mysteries of thy word, which though not contrary to our reason, are yet above it, may we with profoundest adoration say, O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and

knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! We commit ourselves and all whom we ought to bear upon our spirits, to thy care this night. May thy sleepless eye be upon us, and shine for good. Let our rest be refreshing, that we may be strengthened in body, and invigorated in mind, for the duties and trials of a new day, if it be thy will that we should see it; but whatever be thy will respecting us, Lord, prepare us for it, and make us resigned to it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 16.

SCRIPTURE—EZEKIEL XXXIX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

This chapter, which contains the conclusion of the prophecy concerning Gog and Magog, intimates the great and utter destruction that should befall them, ver. 1—7; the way in which it was to be effected, ver. 8—22; and God's gracious purposes in this and his other providential dealings with regard to his church and people, ver. 23—29. We are repeatedly told that his chief end, in whatever he permits or does, is to magnify and sanctify himself, and to make his name to be known. He magnifies himself when he discloses, in his works and ways, the unbounded nature of his perfections, Gen. xix. 19; he sanctifies himself when he manifests the unspotted holiness and perfect rectitude of his dispensations, Ezek. xxxviii. 23; and by his name, which he makes to be known, we are to understand especially the excellencies of his nature and character, Exod. xxxiv. 5—7, or the honour and reputation of his government, Deut. xxxii. 3, 4. Now it is the glory of this his name; it is the excellencies of his nature and character; it is the honour and reputation of his government; it is the development or manifestation of these that he proposes to himself, in all that he permits or does, as his chief end, his primary design; and it is most befitting the majesty of the Godhead, it is most befitting the independent self-sufficiency of the ever blessed Jehovah, to make the pleasure which he takes in the goodness and glory of what he himself is, and what he himself does, his chief end, his primary design. But God delights in diffusing his own blessedness, and in imparting it to his intelligent creatures. Accordingly, he recommends himself to their admiration, love, and praise, by giving them such discoveries of himself as are necessary, not to his, but to their happiness; and it is in proportion as he does so in creation, or providence, or grace, that he is, with peculiar propriety, said to magnify or sanctify himself, or to make his name to be known.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

No weapons formed against Zion shall prosper. God is opposed to those who wield them. Of this

we have an awful proof in the destruction of Gog and his army. The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth. His enemies shall be made to know him as a God of perfect purity and rectitude, who hates all sin, and will assuredly punish it; and not only shall his people be made to know more of his power, and faithfulness, and care, in the deliverances which he works out for them, and to see more clearly their covenant interest in him, but also their experience, in this respect, in times past, will lead powerfully to silence their doubts, remove their fears, and assure their hearts for the time to come. God permits troubles to befall his people not from forgetfulness of them, or inability to protect them, but because they forfeit, by their sins, the sensible enjoyment of his favour, and need to be corrected and restored. No sooner, however, are they brought to humble themselves beneath his rod, and to fall in with his gracious purposes, than he reveals himself again to them as the Lord their God, and shows them the great goodness which he has laid up for those who fear him. Be it ours to remember that our duty and privilege are wisely and graciously connected; that every special deliverance lays us under an additional obligation to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour; and that since it is his primary design, in all his works and ways, to make known his own glory, so it is our duty, in all that we seek or do, to aim at and promote it. Our prayer individually should be, 'Do for me, that I may glorify thee;' and if we ask in faith, he will pour out his Spirit upon us, he will give us the grace which is sufficient for us, and as sure as he begins a good work in us, he will preserve us safe unto his heavenly kingdom, and present us at last faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

PRAYER.

We bless thee, O Lord, that thou art still seated on a throne of mercy and grace with respect to us, and that this fact is of itself sufficient to convince us, not only that thou hast mercy and grace in store for sinners, but art ready to bestow them in a kingly way upon us. Grant us a felt nearness to thee at this time, and may thy Holy Spirit make intercession in us, that we may have the comfortable assurance of Christ's making intercession for us. We unite in offering our morning sacrifice of thanksgiving for thy watchful care of us during another night. We lay down and slept, and rose to see the light and enjoy the comforts of a new day. In the exercise of genuine faith and unfeigned repentance, we desire to approach the fountain of redeeming blood, that our consciences may be purged from guilt, and that we may be put into a capacity of serving thee better, and loving thee more than ever we did. Remembering that none have hardened themselves against thee and prospered, we pray that thou wouldst pour out thy Holy Spirit upon us, to subdue our naturally

proud and rebellious hearts, and to mould us into conformity to thy will; and may we know the great peace which they have who love thy law; may we know thy name in Christ, that we may fear thee and hope in thy mercy; and may we know our covenant-relation to thee in him, that we may be encouraged, by our experience of thy past care, to trust thee more for future need. We rejoice to believe that thou reatest in thy love to thy people, and that when thou permittest troubles to befall them, it is for the purpose of correcting and sanctifying them, and of bringing the graces of thy Spirit more fully into exercise in them; and we rejoice in believing, also, that when thou seest it to be more for thy glory and their good, to allow the waters of affliction to deepen, thou wilt make the sources of their consolation to open, and enable them to go forward, resigned and undisturbed, though they should see no cessation to the tempest but in the tranquillity of the tomb. Grant us grace to fall in with thy gracious designs in all thy dealings towards us; and may we be cheered during the days of our sojourn here below, by the good hope, that when time to us shall be no more, an abundant entrance shall be administered to us into that world where no tears shall bedim our eyes, nor pangs of anguish gnaw our hearts, but where our happiness shall be inconceivably great, without alloy, without interruption, and without end. We adore thee in the judgments which thou executest on the enemies of thy church and people. Deliver not the souls of thy people to the multitude of the wicked. Have respect unto thy covenant, and visit the dark places of the earth, and of sinners' hearts, with saving light; and may our adorable Redeemer away his sceptre of grace and authority over those who have hitherto been rebellious. Enable us this day to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, which is so short, and uncertain, and precious. Keep us watchful unto prayer, lest we fall into temptation. Teach us more clearly our duty, and give us the needful grace to perform it. Vouchsafe to us the light of thy countenance, and preserve us from every thing that might occasion the withdrawal of it, that we may be harmless and blameless, the sons of God without rebuke, and that others, seeing our good works, may glorify thee our heavenly Father. All that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXI. 10.

SCRIPTURE—HEBREWS VI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The apostle exhorts the Hebrews to make greater proficiency than they had yet done in the knowledge of divine things (ver. 1—3.), as being one of the best means of preserving them from apostacy, the nature and consequence of which sin he sets forth in an awfully solemn manner, ver. 4—6. Those of whom he here writes are said to have been enlightened or instructed in the truths of Christianity; to have had experience of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which were common in those days to many who were unregenerate, Mat. vii. 21—23; to have felt a kind of pleasure in the gospel without receiving it in love; and to have tasted of the powers of the world to come, and to have had some dread of hell and desire after heaven. Now if these fall away and become avowed enemies to Christ, they crucify him afresh, by showing that they approve of the conduct of those who nailed him to the cross, and they put him to an open shame, by showing that they hold him worthy of the ignominy and contempt with which he had been treated; and these may be considered, humanly speaking, as given up to final obduracy, for they are supposed to have a knowledge not only of the doctrines of the gospel, but also of its evidences, and yet these evidences they despise; besides, by forsaking the means of grace, they put themselves out of the ordinary course of God's dealings in converting sinners; and, moreover, the heinous nature of their guilt is such as tends to provoke him in the highest degree to withhold his Spirit and grace, without which it is absolutely impossible savingly to repent. In verses 7, 8, the nature and consequence of the sin of apostacy are illustrated by an allusion to ground which no culture improves, and the wild produce of which is to be burned; and thus professing Christians are solemnly warned to beware, lest, through their unfruitfulness, they should be left to fall into it. Ver. 9—12. The apostle having declared his favourable opinion of the Hebrew believers, exhorts them to persevere in works of faith and labours of love, telling them that God would not fail to remember his gracious promises to those who gave such evidences of their covenant-relation to him; and telling them, also, that by being diligent followers of the saints, in their graces and godly conversation, they might attain to the assurance of Christian hope, through the assurance of their possessing the Christian character. He concludes, in ver. 13—20, with unfolding the security of the covenant of grace, as confirmed to Abraham by the word and oath of God, and which extends to all the heirs of Abraham's faith. The oath of God cannot add to the validity of his word. There is, nevertheless, an obvious distinction between them. When his oath is added to his word, all the attributes of Deity are engaged and pledged to support that word, and make it good. This affords strong consolation to those who, from a deep conviction of their guilt, and danger, and helplessness, have fled to Christ, and laid

hold on him as the ground, and his salvation as the object of their hope; and this hope, like an anchor, keeps them steadfast in their adherence to the truth and cause of God. Piercing through every intervening object, and resting on the word and oath of Jehovah the Redeemer for all needful mercy and grace, it elevates the believer above the world's smiles, and cheers him under its frowns, and it fills him with joyful anticipations of the blood-bought inheritance, of which Christ, as the fore-runner, has taken possession in his name.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Since those who are renewed to repentance shall be saved, the apostle's language should not be made a ground of discouragement to the trembling soul that pleads guilty before God, and implores mercy through Christ; and since perseverance is the believer's privilege, as well as duty, none who are truly in Christ shall ever become final apostates from him. It is only, however, in so far as the fruits of faith evince the reality of our interest in him, that we can properly and legitimately derive comfort from this doctrine; and since knowledge, and gifts, and lively affections, are no certain evidences of conversion without brokenness of heart for sin, and without faith which worketh by love, we should seek to possess these essential features of Christian character, and thus to arrive at the assurance of Christian hope. Let us adore the condescension of God to our weakness in confirming, by oath, his gracious covenant. We need this strong consolation to support and cheer us under our sense of natural infirmity and remaining depravity, and amid the trials and spiritual conflicts which we meet with in our Christian course. Let us therefore pray for faith and hope equal to the security which our redeeming God has given us; and by staying ourselves upon him, and perseveringly following his footsteps, we shall be kept steadfast and in peace here, and at last inherit the promises.

PRAYER.

Gracious and ever blessed God, with deepest reverence we desire to prostrate ourselves before thee. By the new and living way which has been opened up in the gospel we would approach unto thee; the helpful influences of thy Holy Spirit we implore from thee. We thank thee for this renewed opportunity of singing thy most worthy praise, of reading thy most blessed word, and of calling upon thy name by prayer. It is but a small portion of our race on whom thou hast conferred such invaluable advantages for eternity as we enjoy. But wherefore is it, O our God, wherefore is it that, when thou didst most reasonably look that we should bring forth corresponding fruit, our grapes have been the grapes of Sodom, and our clusters the clusters of Gomorrah? Justly might the dread mandate go forth against us, Cut them down, why cumber they the ground? But spare us, O Lord, spare

us yet a little longer, till we acquaint ourselves with thee, and be at peace. Be merciful to us, O our God, be merciful to us, and heal our souls, for we have sinned against thee. Let thy hand be upon the Man of thy right hand in our behalf, and may he be made unto us, as he is unto every one that believeth, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. May thy Spirit descend to purify our hearts from the deep moral depravity which naturally pervades them, to implant in us the principles, and affections, and desires of a new nature, and by his continued and powerful operation, to support, and cherish, and mature them, until we bring forth all the fruits of righteousness. We rejoice to believe that wherever thou hast begun a good work, thou wilt perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Hold up our goings in thy paths, that our footsteps may not slip; and when at any time, through the remaining corruption of our nature, and the violence of temptation, we may fall, let us not be utterly cast down, but do thou graciously restore our souls, renew us to repentance, and keep us by thy mighty power through faith unto salvation. O grant unto us the consolation and support which arise from the good hope through grace, that when time to us shall be no more, we shall enter into the joy of our Lord. Prepare us, on this preparation evening, for the duties of the ensuing sabbath. Send help out of Zion to thy faithful servants; and may thy people take no rest to themselves, nor give rest to thee, until thou makest Jerusalem a praise in the midst of the earth. Be gracious to all whom we ought to remember before thy throne, according as their several and varied cases may require. Be unto them, and unto us, a sin-pardoning, a heart-sanctifying, a soul-refreshing, a covenant-providing, a faith-strengthening, a hope-inspiring, a prayer-answering God, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK. SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM i. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CXIX. 145—160.

REMARKS.

Our duty and our privilege is to 'pray always with all prayer, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance.' We have especial need to wait upon the Lord by prayer, when 'trouble and anguish have taken hold upon us.' This, judging from the 145th verse, seems to have been the psalmist's case.

at present, and what does he then do? He lays his case before the Lord by prayer, and he does so with his whole heart. Strange it would have been, if the prayer of a man in trouble and anguish had been only the prayer of the lips. And if we did carefully mark the workings of our own hearts, every hour, of the restless propensity to live without God, it would appear strange that we should, any hour, neglect prayer for mercy to pardon, and grace to help; and stranger still that we should, any hour, pray only with our lips. Like the psalmist, let our whole heart present the prayer which in words our lips express. And like him let the whole heart be desirous that the Lord may hear the prayer; and let the heart, in the spirit of prayer, look up and wait, after the prayer is presented, for an answer. The psalmist's prayer here is, 'save me'; and that is the prayer which suits all circumstances in the case of sinful men in this evil world. Seek, in every prayer, to be saved from your own corrupted and godless hearts; and if you obtain an answer to that prayer, you will be comforted, whatever be your trouble; soothed, whatever be your anguish. Now always when we pray and look up for a gracious answer, we must maintain, through grace, the psalmist's resolution here expressed, 'I will keep thy statutes, I shall keep thy testimonies.' And sweet, and precious, and profitable, it is to make, like the psalmist, prayer our first work in the morning. If this were our constant care, and if, like David too, all our wakeful thoughts during the night were thoughts of spiritual meditation and believing prayer, we might well 'hope in God's word,' that all things would work together for our good. We might then have 'the witness in ourselves,' that God loved us specially, and was working in us graciously, and be well assured that he would hear us because of his love to us, and quicken us because of his covenant with us. Meditate on the word in the night-watches, pour out your whole heart before the Lord in the morning, walk with God throughout the day, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, and be always watchful unto prayer, and, regarding yourself as led to all this by the Spirit of the Lord, you will then be well assured, that, however your spiritual or temporal enemies may 'draw nigh' to do you evil, the Lord is near you to fulfil his word to you, and to be your refuge, and strength, and present help in trouble. If we be unto God a people, he will be unto us a God. Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. Forget not God's law, and he will consider all your affliction, and deliver you. But if we walk not with God and keep not his law, we shall not find God as our friend in need, nor our friend at all. 'Great are his tender mercies,' and many are the ills to which we are exposed, but neither our misfortunes nor his tenderness will move him to our help, unless we can, through grace, truly say with the psalmist, 'yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.' Do we delight in the law of the Lord, and are all its precepts precious in our regards, because they are divine? Does it humble our hearts to mark abounding ungodliness, and are we grieved to behold transgressors, and have we the spiritual confidence of a living faith in

God, and in his pure word of truth, and precious word of promise? If so, and in the degree in which it is so, we resemble the psalmist. And we are not safe for an hour, because we are not partakers of grace at all, unless we have some measure of resemblance to him who was the man after God's own heart.

PRAYER.

O Lord, enable us now to approach thee in prayer, with spiritual reverence and living faith. We desire to be enabled to adore thee with spiritual understanding, as the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being. And we desire to be enabled to adore thee in spiritual faith, as the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who hast begotten thy people again unto a lively hope by his resurrection from the dead. On this morning of thy holy sabbath, we desire to be enabled to look by faith at the place where the Lord lay; and whilst we endeavour thus to see the empty sepulchre of our redeeming Lord, may our hearts look upward to him as now exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to sinners like us, and the remission of sins. O Lord, we can neither of ourselves spiritually know, nor spiritually repent of our sin. Grant to us, we pray thee, a spiritual view of our condition. May we discern our sin, and all our sin, and feel the exceeding sinfulness of sin. O how our hearts are naturally alienated from the life of God; how we worship the creature, and live to ourselves! And, O Lord, who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No man, and no one but that Spirit who, we rejoice to know, is free to the chief of sinners. O may he apply to us the washing of regeneration. May he sanctify and restore us to thee. May he purge our consciences from dead works, and make us truly alive to thee, and enable us to walk by faith, and to walk in the way of all that holiness without which no man shall see thee in glory. Bless to us and to all, for conviction of sin, for sanctification of heart, and for revival in holiness, the means of grace to be used on this holy day. May the Spirit of the Lord speak to souls this day by his servants, with convincing, converting, and edifying power. May the word read and preached this day, be quick and powerful, and prove a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And may many humbled souls this day find Jesus to be precious, and be quickened and qualified, through his imparted grace, henceforth to follow him, in new obedience, and in all duty, through good and through bad report. O take us into covenant with thee; save us from our own spirit, and from the power of the world, and from the

power of Satan. May Satan's power in human souls be overcome through the word and the Spirit of him who is stronger than he; and Jews and Gentiles throughout the earth become regenerated and obedient subjects of Jesus. O may our fellowship be every hour with thee, and our hearts in every thing devoted to thy glory. Gracious and Almighty Father, hear our prayer, and bless us abundantly, for the Lord Jesus' sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 7—11.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CXIX. 161—176.

REMARKS.

There is no little important matter contained in this small portion of the divine word. All have gone astray from God, and from the sources of true happiness, like sheep who have strayed from the shepherd and the green pastures. God seeks the wanderers, desires to make them his true servants, in mercy leads those whom he is to save, to meditate on the commandments and doctrines of his word, searches and sanctifies their hearts through the truth by the Spirit of truth, thus makes their souls to live, and so fits them to glorify him. Then he cherishes this life regularly by his ordinances, quickens it by his providences, and employs it in the willing and delighted obedience of his law. The principle of spiritual life in the soul makes the individual, with decided preference, to choose the way of the divine precepts, and to select, as his peculiar delights, the present joys and the future hopes of salvation. This person regards Christ as his life, and the Lord God as his helper, and all his strength. He discerns a singular beauty in holiness, and he marks and appreciates this divine beauty in every precept of his Father's word, in every requirement of his Father's will, and in every act of responsible duty. Like the psalmist too, his tongue speaks to others of the preciousness of his Father's word, as the word of salvation, and the word of holiness. He owns the Lord to be his teacher, and feels that he alone can open up to man the spiritual views, and impart to man the spiritual relish of the divine testimonies, and statutes, and precepts. And he applies to God by prayer, to have his understanding enlightened, and his heart comforted according to his faithful word of promise. He says habitually in his heart, 'thou God seest me, all my ways are before thee;' and it gives him delight when he finds the Lord graciously enabling him to keep his testimonies with his whole soul. Oftentimes a-day does he lift up his soul in prayer and praise to his covenant God, and he feels that whatever happens to him is right and good, because his God reigneth. He abhors sin as treachery to his God. When he goes to his Father's word in darkness, or depression, he is often made to rejoice in that word, as one that findeth

great spoil. He finds his heart always in peace when it is in love with holiness; and he knows that if his love of holiness were perfect and perpetual, the tranquillity of his peace nothing could ruffle. And his determination is, that, in the strength and grace of that Spirit whose very temple he is, he will reverence, and obey, and walk with God, unshaken by any persecution that may ever arise for righteousness' sake, and patient under whatever trials his God may deem it wise to send.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we are indeed unworthy to take thy holy name into our lips. Do thou grant us the Spirit of grace and supplication, and quicken us to call upon thy name. We know not our own hearts, but thou, O Lord, knowest them; they are deceitful above all things, and thy word assures us that the imaginations of their thoughts are by nature evil continually. Give us grace to know ourselves. Prevent us from saying peace, peace, to our souls, whilst we may be living without holiness and without thee. Incline and fit us for the work of self-examination. What we have read or heard of thy word this day, enable us to apply faithfully to ourselves. May we know and remember well, whatever of this searching and sanctifying word is specially applicable and suitable to our case. O may thy Spirit take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us; may he search our hearts by his searching word. May it be indeed spirit and life to our souls. And then, O Lord, may it be as a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path. May we ever apply to it as our guide, and read and meditate on it daily, our minds ever inquiring, Lord, what wilt thou have us to do? And, alike in health, and in sickness, in prosperity, and in adversity, may its precious promises, and precepts, and spiritual views, be sweet to our taste; yea, sweeter than honey to our mouth. And may he whose word it is, he who is the life and the light of men, be ever regarded by us as the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely. O may we have grace steadily to realize our life hid with Christ in God. May we really be, and have the blessedness of, steadily realizing ourselves as being members of the Redeemer's body, of his flesh, and of his bones. And may we live by that faith without which it is impossible in one thought, or word, or deed, to please thee. May we truly live as not of this world, and as truly feeling that we are not our own. And, in solitude, and in society, in leisure, and in business, may thy Spirit ever maintain in us that love to thee, and to all, which is the fulfilling of the law. As instruments of righteousness in the hand of the Spirit, may we faithfully dis-

charge every duty, temporal and spiritual, which we owe to every one, in their several places and relations. And do thou guide us every day, and guard us every night, and to us fulfil thy promise, I will never leave thee, and I will never forsake thee. When we would wander from thee, do thou graciously arrest and restore us again; and with enlargement of heart, enable us, to the end, to run in the way of thy commandments. Hear, Lord, our prayer, and grant us all we need, to fit us fully to serve and glorify thee, for the sake of him who is all our righteousness, and our all-prevailing Intercessor. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 161.

SCRIPTURE—EZEKIEL XLIII.

REMARKS.

The prophet is in this chapter reproving the Israelites for their departure from the worship of the living and true God. Though they had been favoured highly above all the nations of the earth, by being instructed as to the way in which the Deity was to be worshipped, yet their history testifies that they frequently abused their privileges; and went and served strange gods, even the gods of the heathen. For this departure from the truth, God was angry with them, and withdrew from their temple that presence which had made it the glory and excellence of the whole earth. Yet the prophet distinctly informs them, that if they would return from their idolatries, and forsake their evil practices, that God, whose character is mercy itself, would forgive their iniquities, and would return to them, and 'dwell in the midst of them for ever.' And then he concludes, by pointing out with minuteness the various duties they should perform in fulfilling, hereafter, the religious observances God had established in their land.

Highly favoured as the ancient Jews were, *our* privileges may be regarded as even still more exalted. The Lord has given to us a completed revelation of his will, wherein are contained all the things which belong to our peace. We have detailed to us the sufferings and worth of the blessed Saviour; and we have pointed out to us most minutely what the 'Lord doth require of us.' Yet is it a fact, no less prominent in our history than even it was in theirs, that we neglect our privileges; and amidst the weekly preaching of the gospel, and the frequent dispensations of its ordinances, there are many who are either at ease in Zion, or are devoting the whole energies and affections of their souls to the service of another God than the 'God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' We may not, like the Jews, have our visible idols and altars, where we give away the service that should have been given to God alone. But we

may have our *invisible* idols. If the world, or aught that savours of it, occupy that place in our affections which the Deity should have, then are we as much idolaters as were those whom the prophet in this chapter was reproving. Let us beware lest by abusing our gospel privileges, God in judgment should remove them away, and leave us in the darkness which our souls by nature love. Let us prize them highly, let us cultivate them diligently, let us improve by them steadily, exercising repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, if so, it may be that the Lord may continue to be gracious to us, and 'dwell in the midst of us for ever.'

PRAYER.

Most gracious and most merciful Father, be pleased to regard us with compassion, as we now around our family altar offer up our morning supplications. Let thine ear be open to the cry of thine erring and feeble children, as now conscious, in some degree, of our great sin. We prostrate ourselves before thy throne, and confess that we have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and are not worthy of thy favour. The Lord be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause the light of his countenance to shine upon us. The Lord pardon our iniquities, for they are very great. Look upon us in Christ; see us in the face of thine Anointed; and for his sake blot all our sins out of the book of thy remembrance. Blessed be thy name, O Father of mercies, for that great love wherewith thou hast loved us. Herein indeed was love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and gave his only Son to be our propitiation. Kindle within our souls a flame of affection to him who suffered and died for us. Touch these hearts, which are naturally cold and dead, as with a live coal from off thine altar, and give us to say of Jesus, He is precious to our souls; he is to us the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. And O grant us an interest in his sacrifice, and give us the testimony of thy Spirit with our spirit that we are members of the household of faith, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. In thy great mercy, O Lord, thou hast highly favoured us. Ours is a land of bibles, and sabbaths, and sanctuaries. The Sun of righteousness has risen above us with healing beneath his wings, revealing to us the path that leads to everlasting light. O let the preaching of the gospel be profitable to our souls; may we all feel it to be the power of God, and the wisdom of God to salvation. May the word which was yesterday spoken to us not soon be forgotten, but may its beneficial effects be visible in our conduct, causing us to abstain from all ungodliness, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly,

in the present evil world. Forbid that it ever should be said of us, that light has come into the world, and that we love the darkness rather than the light, our deeds being evil. But may we walk as the children of the light and not of the darkness, remembering that we are not our own, but bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ; and therefore are bound to glorify God with our bodies and spirits which are his. Let thy presence and blessing rest upon us this day. May all the members of this family walk as becometh those who are called by the name of Christ. Counting the days past more than sufficient to have been working the will of the flesh, and that henceforth we shall live not to ourselves, but to the God that redeems us. And may our humble morning prayer rise with acceptance before thee, for the sake of him in whom our trust is placed, even Jesus Christ the Saviour. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII.

SCRIPTURE—HEBREWS VII.

REMARKS.

The exalted nature and character of Christ is a favourite theme with all the sacred writers. They dwell upon it with the delight of those who know that it is to them a matter of the deepest importance. In reasoning with the Hebrews, it was necessary that St Paul should give the subject a decided prominence. For as the Christian was to supersede the Mosaic economy, he could not naturally expect that they would abandon the faith of their fathers, and embrace the religion of Jesus, till they were convinced of the *superiority* of the one over the other. And therefore, as in the former, there had been an order established to offer up the daily sacrifice for the people, which order was now to be abolished, it was necessary that he should show them the excellence of the High Priest of our faith. And this he does by quoting from the Old Testament scriptures, the authority of which all the Hebrews acknowledged; founding Christ's claims to their service upon the fact, that he needed 'not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did once, when he offered up himself.'

Nothing can be more consolatory to the Christian than to know that once in the end has Christ appeared to take away sin by the offering of himself; that he having made his soul an offering for sin, 'there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' And it is consolatory to them, that as the priests of old made intercessions for the people, so 'if any man sin we have an advocate with

the Father, even Jesus Christ.' 'Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us.' Let us therefore cast our burdens on him, and while we strive to live as becomes those for whom the Saviour died, let us take courage in contending with our foes, from the fact that 'he is able to save to the very uttermost all that will come unto God by him.'

PRAYER.

To whom else, O Lord, can we go but unto thee, thou only hast the words of eternal life. Thanks be to thee for that freedom of access which we have to thy throne through Jesus Christ our great High Priest. We bless thee that thou didst think upon us in our lost condition, and didst send thy Son to seek and save us. We thank thee that he became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, that in the very form in which the sin had been committed, in the same form should the atonement be made. Let our souls be washed in that fountain which was opened in Israel for sin and uncleanness. Let us all have an interest in that atoning sacrifice which Jesus offered when he expired on Calvary. We bless thee for the guidance and protection which thou hast extended towards us during the day now drawing to a close. In the house, and by the way, thou hast been our guardian; and in the midst of a multitude of dangers which our eye could not see, nor our arm arrest, we have walked in safety, thou the Lord sustaining us. O what shall we render to the Lord for all his goodness, and for his works of wonder done to the children of men! Our souls and all that is within us would be stirred up to praise and magnify the Lord, for he forgiveth our iniquities, he healeth our diseases, he crowneth us continually with loving kindness and tender mercies. This night, O Lord, ere we close our eyes in slumber, we would make acknowledgment of the many sins and shortcomings which have this day marked and characterized us. Our conduct has often been inconstant as it was inconsistent. Our light has not always been shining, our principles have not always been practised, our aim has not always been to promote thy glory, our very imaginations have been evil in thy sight. O deal not with us according to our merits, but according to thy mercy; for if thou wert to reward us according to our deeds, thou wouldst assuredly cut us down as cumberers of the ground. For the sake of our dear Redeemer, blot our transgressions out of the book of thy remembrance. And be pleased, O Lord, to grant unto us an enlarged measure of grace, that henceforth we may live not to ourselves, but to the God that redeems us; that the light of our Christian profession may so shine, that

others seeing our good works may be led to glorify thee our Father in heaven. O give us to feel the constraining influence of the love of Christ, conforming us more and more to that blessed example he has set us, and causing us to be followers of those who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises. Most holy Father, thou who rulest and upholdest all things, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, take us this night under thy peculiar care. Let thine arm be around us as a protecting shield. Let no harm come near our dwelling-place. We go to repose confident in this, that he who keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. May we meet together in peace and health on a new morning, with hearts filled with gratitude for all thy tender mercies. Graciously hear our evening supplications, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 16—19.

SCRIPTURE—EZEKIEL XLVII.

REMARKS.

The vision which the prophet in this passage is represented as beholding, seems to point to the future history of the church. The gospel, after the ascension of our Saviour, was but like a trifling rivulet proceeding, indeed, from the holiest of all sources, the heavenly temple of God and of the Lamb, but as yet hardly noticeable amid the prevailing systems of the world. Soon, however, its hallowed influence was to extend and deepen till from less to more all the nations of the earth should own its sacred character, and its divine claims. The east country, the cradle of science, an apt type of the more civilized portions of the world; and the wilderness, peopled only by rude tribes symbolizing the uncultivated tenants of more distant lands, were alike to partake of its healing and refreshing waters; and that stream, which at first silently sought the light from under the threshold of the spiritual temple, was to swell and spread till the great sea itself, the prophetic symbol of all the nations of the earth, should experience its effects through every portion of its own wide expanse. These effects are peculiarly characteristic, ver. 9. The necessity of a reviving work of grace among the children of men, the remarkable success which is yet to attend the gospel, and the soul-healing and quickening influence which it is to exert, are here very powerfully exhibited. And though this effect must necessarily result from divine grace, and the Holy Spirit's operations, we find, as we proceed, that the active exertions of a gospel ministry are not to be dispensed with. The ministers and preachers of the gospel, spoken of here as fishers, and in the

New Testament, as 'fishers of men,' are to be zealously employed during all the period of its rapid progress, in gathering into their nets those multitudes for whose conversion and revival it is sent. True, the happy influence of the divine message is not to be at first universal. Besides the flowing waters of this blessed stream, there are likewise to be found the troublesome and stagnant waters of marshes and pools, incapable of sustaining life, and tending rather to spread infection and disease, wherever their influence extends. These being intended to illustrate the condition of the obstinately rebellious and ungrateful, who will not be reclaimed, shall never be healed, but shall be given to salt, to indicate the melancholy and irreversible doom to which such characters are to be consigned. But all along the river's bank, trees laden with delicious fruit for food, and clothed with fresh leaves for medicine, indicated the ample provision which is to be made in the gospel economy for the sustenance of the spiritual life of the church, and for the healing of the nations.

It is of importance to observe, in this and many similar prophecies, the intimate and inseparable connection of the ancient people of God with the latter day of the church of Christ. The Gentile nations converted to the knowledge of the truth, are not for ever to supplant the Lord's peculiar people, but, on the contrary, are to become united with them as joint participants in the divine mercy, or rather are to be attached to them, and made to partake along with them of that rich provision which the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has made for their spiritual welfare, under their own crucified King. For it is 'according to the twelve tribes of Israel,' that the Lord's people are here informed they are to inherit the land; and when they divide it by lot, the strangers that shall sojourn among them, shall likewise receive their inheritance.

From these considerations let us learn to value the gospel in all its rich provisions, and to promote its progress by all the means in our power.

PRAYER.

O thou eternal and ever blessed Jehovah! look down at this time from thy heavenly throne, and accept the imperfect services of us who are now assembled before thee. O Lord, we acknowledge that we cannot plead any merits or services of our own to entitle us to the high privilege of coming into thy presence; and we confess our inability to seek thy face in an acceptable manner. Our righteousness is as filthy rags. Our best services are tainted with sin, and every day has added to the weight and number of those iniquities which attach to our character. Were it not that thou hast graciously promised to forgive our sins, and to hear our prayers, we should not dare to hope for acceptance when we cry to thee. But pleading the merits of Him whom thou hearest alway, we venture to approach thee; and we earnestly beseech thee, O Lord, to be very merciful to us

sinners. Show us the value of a Saviour's love. Enable us to accept of Christ Jesus in all his offices, as our Mediator and intercessor. Help us to rely simply on his blood, and to repose all our confidence in his gracious advocacy. May we no longer regard thee as an enemy, but may we rejoice in thee as our best and most powerful friend; feeling that being justified by faith we have peace with God. Strengthen our weak faith. O Lord, give us grace to resist our temptations and to withstand our spiritual foes. Vouchsafe to us a perpetual sense of thy presence, that we may at once fear to offend thee, and love to serve thee, and enable us ever to live near to thee. Shed abroad in our hearts the sacred influences of the Holy Spirit, that so the good seed of thy word and gospel may grow up unto perfection in our experience and history. And may we never be content with inferior attainments, but be still led to press forward unto the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We thank thee for the cheering intimations of thy holy word, that a period of universal holiness, and peace, and joy, is approaching, and though at present men are too generally sunk in ignorance of thee, and in a state of sin, that we are permitted to look forward to an era in which the bright glory and happy dominion of our exalted Saviour shall be hailed by all tribes and tongues throughout the habitable globe. We bless thee for the progress which the gospel has already made, and is now making; and we beseech thee, to hasten the time when the small stream of gospel light and liberty issuing from the temple of God, shall spread and deepen till it covers the earth as the waters cover the channels of the sea; when thine ancient people shall see their guilt and apostacy, and shall humble themselves, and return unto thee from whom they have deeply revolted, and when it shall be said to thy ransomed church, Arise, shine, for thy light is come; the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. O stir up among all thy professed servants an ardent desire to advance the cause of the gospel. Increase the number and the zeal of thy ministers, for the harvest is plenteous but the labourers are few; and bless whatever means are employed consistently with thy holy will, for advancing the enlargement of thy Son's kingdom. Pour out upon all thy people a Spirit of grace and of supplication, and may they not cease to cry unto thee until thou hast established, and till thou hast made Jerusalem a praise in the earth. And now, O Lord, we beseech thee, to take us, and all who are dear to us, under

thy peculiar care and protection during this day. Keep us in thy fear, defend us from our temptations. Enable us to redeem the time, and to advance with diligence in the narrow way that leadeth unto life, and may this day be thus rendered a means of preparing us for meeting thee at death, and at the bar of judgment. And do thou graciously hear and accept of us, for the sake of Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LVIII. 1—5.

SCRIPTURE—HEBREWS VIII.

REMARKS.

Following out his argument, as to the priestly office of our blessed Redeemer, the apostle begins this chapter by announcing the *sum*, or rather the chief and fundamental article of the whole doctrine which he is engaged in promulgating, viz., that we have such an High Priest as he has described in the former chapter, of the order of Melchizedec; holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; who having fulfilled his sacrificial office, is now exalted to the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. This sublime assurance brings comfort to the desponding Christian; for it teaches him that the means of his recovery are at hand, that life and immortality are brought to light, and that the dark valley of the shadow of death, which his Master has trod before him, leads to a glorious inheritance in the mansions above. But the apostle is even more particular. He assures us, that this High Priest is still executing the functions of his office. Exalted to the throne of God, he is even now 'a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle,' the former signifying the glorious place of his abode on high, where he is for ever engaged in presenting his intercessions for us to the Father, pleading his own merits and sufferings on our behalf, and the latter symbolizing his true church on earth, with which he has graciously promised to be present, even to the end of the world. For this benevolent and gracious work, how admirably fitted is our adorable Redeemer! Into the very presence of the Godhead on high has he carried with him the body in which he tabernacled while on earth. With what force then must his intercessions on behalf of sinners be presented; and how comfortable an assurance does this thought afford us that they must be successful! But to this sanctuary service, he adds, that of the true tabernacle, or spiritual church, 'which the Lord pitched and not man.' Like the priests of old who, from the door of the temple, pronounced a benediction upon the people, our exalted Saviour looks abroad on his church, and showers down on her his rich and abundant blessing. He orders all events in his providence for her real good; giving her times of refreshing from his presence, or visiting her with trial for her purifica-

tion and improvement; causes the wrath of men to praise him, and restraining the remainder of wrath.

What a delightful reflection! the great work to which the Messiah was commissioned, has thus the very surest pledge for its complete accomplishment.

The grand external distinction between the Mosaic and the gospel dispensation, lies in the spirituality of the latter, which addresses itself to the heart, and demands a spiritual homage. Hence the apostle directs the attention of the Hebrews to a prophetic declaration of Jeremiah, xxxi. 31, with reference to the abolition of the Mosaic covenant, in which he states, that after that event God would put his laws into the minds of his people, and write them in their hearts. The New Testament requires not the cold exterior services of a pompous ritual, but it demands a sincere and hearty obedience to the law of God, and an unwearying confidence in the promises of God, and the work of the Redeemer; and when this period shall have reached its perfection, the full fruition of the plan of salvation shall be brought about, and the ignorance and ungodliness of men shall universally yield to the light, and the love, and the holiness of pure religion. Conscience and the dread anticipation of deserved wrath, shall no longer keep the sinner under bondage; for the Lord will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will he remember no more. Such is the end of the Christian's hopes, such the object of the church's history and experience. How delightful the prospect! How blessed the assurance! And how well calculated to stimulate our feeble energies, and to urge on our steady footsteps in the way of life!

PRAYER.

O thou eternal and ever blessed Jehovah, the God of all the families of the earth, behold us thy servants prostrating ourselves before thee, this evening, as humble suppliants of thy mercy. Wherewithal shall we come before the Lord, or bow ourselves before the Most High God. Behold we have no merits to plead, no rights to demand. We must cast ourselves, as we now do, on thy undeserved mercy vouchsafed unto us through the mediation of thy blessed Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ; who hath given himself a ransom for us, and through whose intercession thou seest neither iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel. We thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast so graciously visited the lost and ruined race of Adam, by the mission of thy Son into the world, and hast through him bestowed upon us so many privileges, and so many promises. Without thy mercy thus manifested in him, how sad must have been our condition, how miserable our prospects! And when we meditate upon thy love, we desire to feel the warmest sentiments of gratitude to thee the Father of mercies, and to him the Fountain of every blessing. Forbid, we beseech thee, that we should continue to live in forgetfulness of thee, or that the love we owe thee should fail to

be manifested in our lives. Let us not be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. O grant us true repentance, and so impress us with the danger of our natural state, and with thy hatred of iniquity, as to induce us henceforward to live in the exercise of the principles of our holy faith, and under the powerful impression of our obligation to devote ourselves to thy service. Behold what manner of love thou our Father in heaven hast bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God! Grant us grace, we entreat thee, to be followers of thee, as dear children, and to honour thee in our thoughts, words, and actions. We commit ourselves to thy care during this night. May we lay us down in thy fear, and arise in thy favour; and may we be fitted by the repose of the night for a diligent and faithful discharge of duty on the morrow. Look in kindness upon all who are dear to us. May we all be united under Christ Jesus as our common head, our elder brother, our best and truest friend. Bless all who belong to the household of faith, especially those of the same parish and congregation with ourselves. Grant that the holy religion of the cross may produce its happy fruits in rich abundance among us. May vice in all its degraded forms give place to the holiness, and peace, and joy of the faith of Jesus; and may old and young, rich and poor among us, learn to be faithful to the cause of our blessed Master. Extend the influence of our holy faith among all nations, and may all the ends of the earth remember and turn unto the Lord. Gather thy people Israel into thy fold. Stir up a spirit of prayer on their behalf among all who know thy name, and send forth many faithful and devoted ministers to proclaim in every quarter of the globe the unsearchable riches of Christ. These our humble prayers, O Lord, are before thee. Hear us, we beseech thee, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 9—15.

SCRIPTURE—DANIEL I.

REMARKS.

The profaneness of the Jewish people having at length reached its climax, the dreadful threatenings which had so frequently been pronounced upon them by the prophets, began to be fulfilled. Having lost their independence as a nation, and having ventured to rebel against their Chaldean conquerors, Nebuchadnezzar seized the excuse thus afforded him for

establishing more rigorously than ever his dominion in Judea. It was with this view that he bound and carried captive Jehoiakim the king, dismantled the temple of many of its sacred treasures, and caused a certain number of the noblest of the Jewish youths to be brought to Babylon, that they might be educated in the learning and religion of their new masters, and thus contribute, by their station and influence, to maintain his authority over their countrymen. Among these youths, as we find by this chapter, were Daniel the prophet, to whose divine inspiration we are indebted for this account, and the three children who were afterwards so barbarously exposed to the fury of the burning furnace, and so miraculously preserved amid the flames. It was not the policy of the king of Babylon to treat these young men with severity. On the contrary, being desirous to inspire them with love for their new country, and to wean them from the associations of childhood, he at once introduced them to the luxuries of the royal palace, and placed them under the charge of one of his courtiers, that they might be educated in the mode most likely at once to win their affections and to expand their minds. But here we witness the importance of early instruction in the principles of true religion. Daniel, whose influence it would appear prevailed over the other three to follow his example, resolved that he would not indulge in the sumptuous viands with which his appetite was courted, but would content himself with a spare diet and simple fare. His reasons, doubtless, were well founded, and such as might have been expected from his character.

Whatever motives induced Daniel and his fellows to abstain as they did from the indulgences by which they were solicited, we are assured that their conduct was approved by their divine Master. The fears of their keeper, the prince of the eunuchs, lest their personal appearance might suffer from poverty of diet, and thus his own life be endangered, which prevented his listening to the petition of these godly youths, were proved to be unfounded. The simple food of which they partook was blessed by God as the means of health and happy spirits; and the kindness of Melzar, the steward of the prince of the eunuchs, in granting their request, even at great personal risk, was acknowledged by God in the speedy and manifest improvement of their personal appearance. Nor can we doubt that the superiority which they afterwards discovered over the young men who 'did eat the portion of the king's meat,' and even over the magicians and astrologers of the realm in those very sciences on an acquaintance with which they most prided themselves, was to be traced to the approbation of that great God, who, in one way or another, never fails to afford the amplest attestation to the self-denial, zeal, or devotion, of his faithful servants; who, in exile and captivity, in imprisonment and pain, follows his people with the kind consolations of his grace and the merciful dispensations of his providence; who, if he does not see meet to remove his stroke from them, or to free them from their foes, gives them peace of mind in their severest sufferings, and causes even their enemies to be at peace with them, and all

who observe them acknowledge that blessed is the man who trusteth in him.

From this passage, then, let us learn, 1st. The importance of self-denial. 2d. Let us learn that good dispositions will generally gain friends under the most unfavourable circumstances. 3d. Let us learn to cultivate a spirit of contentment with the lot which providence has appointed us, making the most of our opportunities, improving our advantages, and diligently devoting ourselves to the duties to which we are called.

PRAYER.

We desire to unite this morning, O Almighty Father, in adoring thy perfections, and in thanking thee for our continued preservation, and for all our mercies. But, O Lord, we confess we had been too long ungrateful and disobedient. In vain had thy perfections been manifested in thy works of creation and providence; in vain had the gracious invitations of the gospel been proclaimed to us. We too long and too frequently continued to follow after the devices and desires of our own hearts. We rejected thy counsel, and would none of thy reproof. But thou wouldest not cast us off for ever. Thou didst graciously continue to invite us to the knowledge and reception of thy truth, and we are now permitted to approach thy throne through the mediation of that adorable Redeemer whom thou hearest always. O may our gratitude to thee be permanent and practical! May the goodness of God lead us to that repentance which needeth not to be repented of. May the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Teach us the comparative value of time and of eternity. Enable us to make the only wise choice between them; and in seeking for heaven, may we not forget that thou requirest of us to resist temptation in whatever form it may assail us, and to renounce sin, however pleasing to our natural propensities. May the example of thy youthful servants, of whose faithfulness we have just been reading in thy holy word, encourage us to maintain our devotedness to thee in the midst of a crooked and perverse world; and may we be ready, at all times, to make whatever sacrifices thou mayst see meet to demand, in order that we may bear our faithful testimony to the purity and holiness of thy law, and to the justice and supremacy of thy demands. Watch over us this day for good; defend us from all our enemies; encourage us in resisting temptation; and enable us to walk as in thy presence, and to live continually to thy glory. Give us the same mind which was also in Christ, that we may be humble,

forgiving, and patient. Lord, bless, we beseech thee, all whom we love. Bless our friends and relations every where. May they be thy friends, united with thee by a living faith, and with us by stronger ties than nature or earthly affection can supply; and when at last the purposes of thy providence are finished with us, one by one, upon earth, may we meet to part no more in the glorious abodes which are prepared for thy servants in the land of heavenly promise. Bless the parish and congregation to which, in thy providence, we belong. May religion, pure and undefiled, flourish among us. In every heart and in every family do thou preside. Discourage the works of darkness and of vice. Strengthen the better principles of thy people, and shed abroad thy Holy Spirit upon them. Visit with the supports and encouragements of thy grace thy servant who ministers among us in holy things, and may he experience the true happiness of a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Bless and prosper thy universal church. Spread her boundaries from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Bless especially our beloved Zion. Stir up in her ministers and people a more ardent zeal for thy honour and glory, and render her an instrument of extensive usefulness both at home and abroad. Give prosperity to all the measures adopted by her courts for advancing the interests of the gospel, and cheer the hearts of thy servants by establishing the work of their hands in thy cause. We beseech thee to hear these our humble prayers for the sake of Christ Jesus, whom thou hearest always. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LXIV.

SCRIPTURE—HEBREWS IX.

REMARKS.

The chief object of the apostle in this chapter is to show that the blood of Christ is necessary to the ratification and efficacy of the covenant of grace. With this view, writing as he does to his Hebrew countrymen, who were too apt to repose in the formalities of the Jewish ritual, he begins the chapter by an enumeration of several important parts of the tabernacle and its furniture, each of which symbolized or illustrated some great truth connected with the work of man's salvation. He thus reminds them that the high priest, in accomplishing the service of God, though he habitually went into the first or outer tabernacle, entered the second, or the holy of holies, only once every year, and this not without blood,

which he there offered in expiation of the sins first of himself, and then of the people. This act of his, striking and solemn as it was, and well calculated to awe the multitude by its mystery, appointed, too, as it had been, by God, still had no inherent efficacy. Its value mainly consisted in its being a type or symbol of the great expiatory offering of Jesus, our spiritual High Priest, who, having laid down his life on the altar of Calvary, entered into heaven, that holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us, and carried with him there not the blood of the sacrifice only, but the very body in which he suffered as our expiation.

Hence he argues that the blood of Christ, symbolized as it had been by the blood of the tabernacle offerings, must be effectual for the purification of believers; and he appeals to their Jewish principles in confirmation of this conclusion, arguing from the acknowledged efficacy of the Mosaic sacrifices in purifying from outward pollutions, to that of Christ's offering in the cleansing of the soul and conscience from its spiritual guilt. But there is another view of the Saviour's work which leads to the same conclusion, and to which the apostle next turns the attention of believers. It is derived from the fact, that the gospel possesses the nature of a testament or will, the force of which depends on the death of a testator. Hence it appears that the whole value of the gospel promises is derived from the death of Christ, the shedding of whose blood on Calvary brought these promises within the reach of believers. This argument is likewise confirmed by reference to the symbolic services under the first testament, the most important feature in which was the use of the blood of the sacrificial victims, sprinkling and purifying both the tabernacle and the vessels of the ministry.

The conclusion, then, to which we are thus brought is, that without shedding of blood is no remission; that the sacrifice of Christ is not only necessary, but perfectly effectual to the purification of God's people from every taint of sin; and that the heavenly places into which Christ hath already entered are his gracious purchase for his redeemed family.

Hence we learn, 1st, The folly of trusting to any other mode of salvation than that provided by Jesus the Son of God, or of fancying that any hope of pardon is to be found in abstract views of the divine mercy.

2d. The perfection of the plan of salvation by the humiliation and death of Christ.

3d. The glorious prospects of the followers of Jesus—heaven. The abode of angels, and of the spirits of the just, the seat of holiness, and peace, and joy, where God and that Saviour whom they love reside, is the home to which they are going.

PRAYER.

O Almighty God, the Creator and Governor of the universe, who, though infinitely exalted above the conception of men or of angels, condescendest to invite us into thy presence, and to accept our humble prayers, regard, we beseech thee, with kindness and grace, us, thy unworthy

creatures, who now approach thy footstool that we may adore thy infinite perfections, and claim thy favourable regards. We plead no merits nor services of ours in thy holy presence. We know that we are all as an unclean thing, and that our very righteousnesses are as filthy rags. But we plead the merits of that divine Redeemer, who was made under the law, that for us transgressors he might fulfil it, and who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. We plead thy acceptance of his vicarious righteousness, and we joyfully rest in the assurance that his finished work has amply satisfied thy justice, and opened a way to heaven for all believers. Teach us, O Lord, to come to Jesus for pardon and peace, for strength and holiness. Justify us by his blood, and sanctify us by his Spirit. Draw us and we will run after thee. Work thou in us to will and to do of thy good pleasure. Grant us repentance unto life, and the various graces of thy Holy Spirit. May he dwell in our hearts by faith, that so we may be rooted and grounded in love, and be enabled to comprehend, with all saints, what is the height and the depth, the length and the breadth, of the love of God in Christ Jesus. Subdue the numerous enemies who on every hand are waiting for our halting. Fortify us against our temptations, which are too strong for our unaided power to resist with success. Keep us humble, watchful, and prayerful. May we never think we have attained, either are already perfect, but still press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. We desire to thank thee for thy kindness to us during the course of this day, and for the comfortable circumstances in which we are permitted this evening to assemble before thee. We would lay us down this night with the most perfect confidence in thy protection. Thou never sleepest nor sleepest, neither wilt thou suffer thy servants to fall into any real evil. May we be refreshed by the repose of the night, that we may the better pursue our Christian course on another day. Protect, we beseech thee, all our dear relatives and friends. Bestow upon them in this world the knowledge of the truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. May they and we be brought in safety through all the dangers and temptations of this mortal existence, till at last we arrive at the blessed kingdom above, to dwell together in thy glorious presence for ever and ever. Prosper thy cause in the world. Send the glad tidings of salvation through all the nations of the earth. Let the offers of

thy gospel speedily reach both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free; and may the time soon come when there shall be one fold and one Shepherd, and when in all the holy mountain of the Lord there shall no longer be any thing to hurt or to offend. Bless all thy faithful ministers. Give them true knowledge of thy word, and enable them to adorn the doctrine of our God and Saviour, and to be an example to all the flock. Make them wise to win souls to Christ. May thy servant who ministers to us in holy things be abundantly honoured by thee in all his duties, and may the fruits of his exertions, accompanied by thy Spirit, be abundantly manifested in our community. Accept these our humble and united prayers for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXVI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—DANIEL II.

REMARKS.

The scene of the very striking events recorded in this chapter, was the city of Babylon, which, on account of its vast extent, its wealth, and grandeur, has been justly regarded as one of the wonders of the world. Being the capital of the empire of Chaldaea, several monarchs, ambitious of fame, exerted their influence to render it impregnable, and to adorn it in a manner becoming the seat of royalty. Situated on the Euphrates, that noble river flowed through it; and by its pure and salubrious stream afforded many advantages to its immense population. The inspired writers, speaking of Babylon, in reference to its magnitude, and wealth, and splendour, make use of expressions which demonstrate the proud pre-eminence which it attained at this period of its history. They style it the 'golden city,' 'the glory of kingdoms,' 'the beauty of Chaldaea's excellency;' besides other appellations equally descriptive of its magnificence and pride.

'But that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.' Here we have an instance in point. Babylon, you know, was the chief seat of ancient idolatry. There was the temple of Belus, and probably, the tower of Babel that was impiously reared by vain and wicked men, after the flood, to make themselves a name, and to render them independent of the God of heaven. There, every species of error, and of impurity, and ungodliness, was openly and unblushingly indulged. And hence, this renowned city became the appropriate emblem of the apostate church which hath upon her forehead a name written, 'Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.'

When we look at this scene of wickedness and

idolatry, how can we fail to be struck at the wisdom, the sovereignty, and power of Jehovah, in making his name known there, and signally demonstrating the vanity of idols. On the very spot where Satan's kingdom had its throne, God confounded the worshippers of Baal, and used the very king of Babylon as the instrument of giving a fatal blow to idolatry.

How this unlooked for event was brought about, we are informed in the sacred narrative. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had recently returned from Egypt and Judea, flushed with victory. We doubt not, he entered his capital amidst all the demonstrations of triumph. Who can describe the pride of his heart, as he contemplated the magnitude and variety of his conquests. The Jews, as a nation, were dragged at his chariot wheels, and treated with every species of ignominy. He had profanely destroyed their temple by fire, and robbed it of all its vessels of gold. And now that he carried the worshippers of Jehovah away from the land of their fathers, and deprived them of all the means of grace, he concluded that the principles of their religion would be utterly destroyed, and the very name of Jehovah, whom they adored, blotted out from the annals of the universe.

But how vain are the expectations of the wicked! They may desire, but they cannot overturn the throne of omnipotence. There is an overruling and special providence that can say with effect to the wrath of man, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,' and Nebuchadnezzar is forced to acknowledge the supremacy of the God of Israel. This he openly confesses. 'Of a truth it is, your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret.' And thus a public and emphatic testimony was borne to the glory of Jehovah, not by a private individual, but by one of the mightiest sovereigns that ever filled a throne, and that on the very seat of idolatry. And after the lapse of ages, when the ruins of Babylon can hardly be traced by the inquisitive traveller, how cheering the thought, that the faith of Daniel and his companions has survived every change, and every danger, and is, at this moment, a source of pure and everlasting consolation to the people of God over the habitable parts of the earth.

On the interpretation of the memorable dream our limits do not permit us to enter. The stone cut out without hands denotes the kingdom of Christ, which is destined to smite the image of idolatry, and to increase in magnitude and in glory till it fill the whole earth. Let us rejoice in the bright prospect that is then held out to our view; and let us labour and pray that it may be speedily and fully realized. Amen.

PRAYER.

O God, our God, thou art very great. Thou art clothed with honour and with majesty. Thou coverest thyself with light as with a garment; thou makest the clouds thy chariot; thou walkest on the wings of the wind. Who would not fear thee, and glorify thy name, for thou only art

holy. May our souls be filled with sacred awe, while in prayer we draw nigh the footstool of thy mercy. Be pleased, O Lord, to give us vivid and exalted conceptions of thy matchless glory, that we may feel the solemnity with which it becomes us to approach thy throne, and to present to thee the tribute of our adoration and praise. May we now be privileged to enter into thy presence-chamber, and to hold direct converse with the King of kings and Lord of lords. And while engaged in holy worship, may all our thoughts and desires be supremely fixed on thee, so that under the elevating and sustaining influence of the Spirit of grace and supplication, we may be enabled to enjoy close communion with thee, and to feel assured that thou art the hearer of prayer. O thou who art the preserver of men, what shall we render to thee for having watched over us so graciously during the silence of the bygone night, and for having brought us in safety, in peace, and in comfort, to the light of another day? Hadst thou dealt with us as our iniquities deserve, thou mightest have turned the season of our repose into a time of misery; have scared us with dreams, and terrified us with night visions. We are reminded, in the portion of thy word which we have now perused, that thou hast access to the spirit of men, and that thou observest all its impressions and thoughts by night as well as by day. Thou art thus bearing testimony to thine own presence and omniscience, as the invisible Jehovah; and by the terror awakened in the guilty soul, art rebuking the atheism and idolatry of our fallen nature, and bidding the unbeliever to consider and know that thou, and thou only, art God. May we ever bear in remembrance that it is in thee we live, and move, and have our being. We desire, O God, to rejoice in thy special providence. Thou takest knowledge of all the secret motions of our minds, as well as of our words and actions. Nothing escapes thine omniscient eye. Thou takest special notice of whatever relates to the welfare of thy people, or that bears on thy kingdom and glory. The evil designs of the wicked are known to thee. And we bless thee who markest the schemes formed by the ungodly for the destruction of thy church, and in due time dost signally defeat them. Verily thou art our refuge and our strength, our very present help in trouble. O God, in these times of danger do thou in mercy interpose in behalf of thine own cause. With thee nothing is impossible. Thou canst make the wrath of man to praise thee, and restrain the remainder thereof. We rejoice,

therefore, that under the protection of the great Head of our church, all its interests are safe. Hasten, O Lord, the time when the stone cut out without hands shall smite every idolatrous image, and become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. May we live to behold the dawn of the latter day glory. May our souls be completely delivered from atheism and idolatry, and be made temples of the Holy Ghost, that this day, and henceforth, we may live wholly to thy praise. Wash us from all our iniquities. Clothe us with Christ's righteousness, and beautify us with his salvation. And all we ask is for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XL. 6.

SCRIPTURE—HEBREWS X.

REMARKS.

So rich is this chapter in precious matter, that instead of a few remarks, it would require, to do it justice, a volume of illustrations. To the eye of the believer, how immense and how glorious is the field of Christian doctrine which it opens up to our view. The perfection of Christ's atoning sacrifice forms the leading theme, and the establishment of this fundamental article of our holy faith, by arguments the most clear and irresistible. There is, first of all, a demonstration given of the absolute necessity of such an atonement, founded on the fact, that the sacrifices under the law were utterly inadequate to take away the guilt of sin, or to protect those who offered them from merited condemnation. They possessed no intrinsic efficacy whatever. The very circumstance of their being so frequently repeated, of their being offered year by year continually, manifestly implied that they could not 'make the comers thereunto perfect.' Why were they presented every day, every week, every month, every year, if they possessed any virtue for the expiation of sin? Had the conscience of the transgressor been once purged from guilt, why require another and another sacrifice? This is the question we have to put in reasoning with an unbelieving Jew. 'But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.' The sinner was thus taught not to rest in them for pardon and eternal life. They were merely a shadow of good things to come, a type of the vicarious sacrifice, which, in the fullness of time, was offered up upon the cross; a means of directing the eye of faith, and hope, and desire, to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. And, if this was their proper character and design, how emphatically did they proclaim the necessity of a divine atonement. 'For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.'

How marvellous the love of Christ! When there

was no eye to pity us, and no hand to save us, his own eye had compassion on us, and his arm brought us salvation. Of his own accord he generously undertook our recovery. 'Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.' He descended from the throne of his glory, assumed our nature without any of its depravity, obeyed the violated law in our stead, brought in an everlasting righteousness, and made an end of sin. He is the propitiation. This is the ground of our hope. By one sacrifice he perfected for ever all them that are sanctified. We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Having by his obedience and suffering magnified the law, and made it honourable, he, as an evidence that he accomplished the work of our redemption, rose as a conqueror over death and the grave, and as the High Priest of our profession, ascended into heaven, and entered the holy of holies, there to present, before his Father's throne, the blood of atonement, in virtue of which all who believe in him are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. Let us, therefore, in his name, draw nigh to the mercy seat, and with holy boldness, plead for mercy to pardon, and grace to help us in time of need. Let every awakened sinner cast his burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain him. The blessings which he purchased are freely bestowed. The new covenant, with all its treasures of grace, invites our confidence. The Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ declares that he will effect a saving change on all who take refuge in the hope that is set before us in the gospel. 'I will put my laws into their hearts, and write them in their minds, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.'

PRAYER.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; the whole earth is full of thy glory. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The heavens are not clean in thy sight; thou chargest thine angels with folly. Shall mortal man, who drinketh in iniquity like water, be therefore just with God? O do thou impress our souls with this awakening consideration. May we, in the light of thy holiness, clearly see our own guilt and depravity. Behold we are vile, and what shall we answer thee? Our hearts condemn us, and thou art greater than our hearts, and knowest all things. Wert thou to mark iniquity against us, who, O Lord, could stand? The angels who surround thy throne veil their faces with their wings while contemplating the glory of thy eternal holiness. Lord, teach us how deep ought our self-abasement and our penitence to be. We feel that we are all sinfulness together, and utterly unworthy to take thy holy name into our polluted lips, or to lift up our eyes to the place where thine honour dwells. Under an overpowering sense of our guilt and corruption, we

desire to make a full and unfeigned acknowledgment of our transgressions, and smiting upon our breasts, to say, God be merciful to us sinners. We bless thee, O God, that thou hast not left us to perish in our iniquities. We rejoice in the tidings of mercy which the gospel has brought to our ears. O do thou savingly reveal to each of us the adorable Redeemer who came in the name of the Lord to save us. May we now, and ever, honour him as the High Priest of our profession, in whose name alone we can have access to thy throne, and through whose merits alone we can hope for pardon and eternal life. Help us to cast the heavy burden of our sins upon him, and trusting in his blood and righteousness, to enter into a state of peace and reconciliation. May we experience the constraining influence of his redeeming love, while we contemplate his willingness to undertake our cause, and to suffer and die, to atone for our guilt. Believing that he has finished the work of our redemption, may we joyfully embrace his righteousness, and know assuredly that his blood cleanseth from all sin. O do thou, for his sake, seal pardon on the conscience of each of us. Say to the trembling soul, Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee. And having washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, may we be enabled to live as the redeemed of the Lord. Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil; and having an High Priest over the house of God, may we draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. May the Holy Spirit perform his own blessed work in our souls. May he make us living temples of the holy God. May he sanctify our whole nature, and fit us for thy kingdom and glory. And now that another day is gone, never to return, and that this night may be our last, may we experience the blessedness of a personal interest in the atoning sacrifice, the righteousness, and intercession of Christ, so that, living or dying, we may as individuals, and as a family, be the Lord's. Extend to others the blessings we have implored for ourselves. May all men take refuge in the only name through which we can be saved. And now to thee the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, we would ascribe all blessing and glory. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXIV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—DANIEL III.

REMARKS.

What a melancholy contrast between the conduct of Nebuchadnezzar, as related in the end of the preceding chapter, and that recorded in this! We now find him trampling on his own solemn profession, and setting the power of God at defiance, and endeavouring to destroy the true faith, and using all his influence, as a king, to promote idolatry. Surely his goodness was 'but as the morning cloud and early dew that soon vanisheth away.' 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.'

How long it was after the discovery and interpretation of his dream Nebuchadnezzar committed this daring sin, we are not informed. We think it highly probable that the magicians, and astrologers, the sorcerers, the Chaldeans, these priests of Baal, embraced the first opportunity of alienating his mind from the servants of Jehovah, and from the testimony which he had borne to the true faith. They were manifestly alarmed at that testimony. Their whole system of worship was in danger. Should the king continue to receive instruction in the principles of religion from Daniel and his friends, might he not speedily renounce his allegiance to Baal, and command that every vestige of idolatry be abolished throughout the empire? And we doubt not that, under the influence of such fears, and actuated by the enmity of the carnal mind, they, and the leading men of the nation, used means to prevail upon Nebuchadnezzar to make a public demonstration in favour of idolatry. The fickle monarch was the willing victim of delusion. He accordingly sought at once to gratify his own vanity, and the malignity of the priests of Baal. The golden image which he set up on the plains of Dura, was designed as a fatal snare for Daniel and his companions. Their enemies well knew that they would, on no account, worship the idol. The plot was, therefore, artfully laid for their destruction. The ceremony of dedication was of the most imposing description. The king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, and judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers, &c. They assemble. The royal decree is promulgated. Every one is required, on pain of death, to do homage to the golden image. The trumpet sounds and presently all the worshippers of Baal, high and low, obsequiously fall down and worship. What a painful spectacle. A whole empire prostrated before a dumb idol! This is British India in our own day. And this is a picture of every soul that is dead in trespasses and in sins. Be it atheism, or infidelity, or popery, or the love of the world, that reigns within your soul, behold in this picture your own image. And can you deliberately consent to perish under this guilt, and to sink into this degradation?

Where are now the exiles of Israel? Are they among these idolatrous worshippers? No. They

have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Their adversaries were fully aware of this, and exulted in the consideration. Tidings are instantly conveyed to the king. The report of disobedience roused his ire. Three of the captives are dragged into his presence. The murderous command is issued afresh. All are required to worship the golden image. Music, with its enchanting influence, is brought to bear on their minds. And if allurements prevail not, let the fiery furnace pour forth all its terrors. How trying the situation of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Hear the threatening: 'But if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver ye out of my hands?'

There is a magnanimity in true faith that rises superior to all danger. What flesh and blood can never communicate, the grace of God can impart. The servants of Jehovah are calm, intrepid, and faithful. They hesitate not for a moment. Read ver. 17, 18. This is truly sublime. How strong their faith! How firm their confidence! How noble their determination! And is this the spirit of devotedness to Christ which, in this day of trial, we breathe? Are we really on the Lord's side? Are we resolved, come what will, never to injure our own conscience, or betray his cause?

The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. There is no mercy in the heart of an idolater, towards the servants of God. The three young confessors are forthwith cast into the midst of the fiery furnace, and their enemies lift the fiendish shout of exultation at the success of their villanous plot.

But how short-lived are the triumphs of the wicked! What is this that so powerfully arrests the eye of Nebuchadnezzar? 'Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.' Yes. It is no illusion. The Lord of glory is there. Behold the wondrous sight. Approach all ye nobles, and rulers, and captains, and look into the fiery furnace. Baal, the god of fire, cannot injure so much as a hair of the heads of the servants of Jehovah. The king is alarmed. Conscience tells him he has been fighting against omnipotence. How can he endure to look on the Son of God, at whose tribunal he and all his idolatrous subjects must soon appear? He is now solicitous to save the lives which a few moments ago he sought to destroy. 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither.'

We are thus impressively taught what is the duty of the church in times of difficulties and danger. Let her be faithful to her divine Head. He is able to succour her. And those who are now in league to effect her ruin, will learn how vain it is to contend against the Lord and his Anointed. The bush may burn, but cannot be consumed. 'Be still, and know that I am God.'

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only living and true God. To whom shall we go but unto thee;

thou only hast the words of eternal life. We desire therefore ever to view thee in Christ Jesus as our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. Our lot is cast in perilous times. We live in an age, and in a country, in which multitudes are combined to resist thy authority, and to overthrow thy righteous cause. Our hearts tremble for the safety of the ark of the covenant. Thy church, O blessed Saviour, that church which thou hast loved with an everlasting love, and purchased with thy blood, is cast into the fiery furnace of persecution. The hand of power is lifted up against her to inflict a fatal blow. Her adversaries mock at her sabbaths: and treacherous friends forsake her in the hour of peril. But we rejoice that thou who hast all power in heaven and on earth, reignest, and that thou art faithful to thy promises. O be graciously present with thy church amidst all her tribulations. Say to her, When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the holy One of Israel. Grant that when the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord may lift up a standard against him. Be thou a wall of fire around our Zion, and the glory in the midst of her. Suffer no weapon formed against her to prosper. And may she be, in due time, brought out of the furnace, as silver that is purified seven times. We pray that we, individually, may have grace to be faithful even unto death. Amidst the afflictions and bereavements of life, help us to look up to thee for strength and consolation. May we experience the tenderness of thy care and sympathy. Thou art a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Thou hast graciously said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Adored be thy name for this endearing promise. And using it aright, may we lean on that arm which is never weary, and on that bosom which is never cold. And may the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, of holiness, and love, dwell in us, and guide us safely into heaven. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIV. 8.

SCRIPTURE—HEBREWS XI.

REMARKS.

The inspired writers indulge but very sparingly in the use of definitions. They do not waste their time in exhibiting the niceties of philosophical distinctions, or evince any desire to gratify the pride of intellect, by a display of metaphysical refinements. They have no sympathy with the spirit of the schoolmen who, in their eagerness to show the acuteness of their own minds, and the extent of their learning, lose sight altogether of the truth, and darken counsel by words without knowledge. Nobler objects occupy their regards, and holier principles regulate their conduct. They unite on matters of eternal moment. They are the servants of God. They speak as they are moved by the Holy Ghost. And what is the result? Their style is plain and perspicuous as the light of day; so plain, indeed, that he who runs may read.

'O how unlike the complex works of man,
Is heaven's easy, artless, unincumbered plan;
Majestic in its own simplicity.'

While, however, the scriptures do not abound in the use of definitions, we have here an instance in which it is used; and for its use a good reason may be assigned. This apostle is about to proceed to show the mighty influence which faith is designed to exert on our heart and life. This great principle, simple though it be, is but little understood by multitudes who hear the gospel. Some regard it as altogether mysterious, if not as destitute of reality. Now, to guard against such an erroneous impression, and to make it appear that it is an intelligent and active principle, of mighty power, it is thus defined, 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' And as illustrations, appropriate, and vivid, and powerful, we are directed, in this chapter, to mark the high place which it occupies in the economy of our salvation, as demonstrated by the example of many of the Old Testament saints, the great cloud of witnesses. This is most felicitous. We may not be able to comprehend the abstract principle of faith; but who can look into its effects, as here delineated, and not be satisfied that those in whose souls it is in lively exercise are deeply sensible of its life-giving and sustaining influence. May ours be that faith which is of the operation of God.

One thing regarding true faith is in this chapter brought very prominently into view. It rests wholly and exclusively on the word of God. This is its sure and immutable foundation. Whatever the Lord has been pleased to reveal, that is sincerely and cordially believed by the true Christian. There must be no mental reservation, and no restriction as to what is credited in reference to the sacred volume. What God requires is an entire faith in the entire testimony. How beautifully was this exemplified in the case of those elders who obtained a good report. Even what was mysterious in its nature, what was

beyond the range of their observation, or what was above their limited capacities, enough with them that it bore the impress of divine authority. They embraced it as an article of their faith, and in circumstances the most trying, acted upon it, doubting not, that what the Lord God had spoken was infallibly true, and that every word must have its accomplishment. Mark the conduct of Noah, of Abraham, of Sarah, of Moses, and other worthies. They implicitly relied on what God had revealed to them. They evidenced their faith by their steady and cheerful obedience. They patiently submitted to trials and afflictions, to persecutions and dangers; and under the influence of this holy principle, they rose above them all. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. One other fact, in connection with true faith, merits our special notice. Under its blessed influence these believers impressively realized the gracious presence of their God and Saviour, and felt the blessedness of religion. Enoch walked with God. He walked as seeing him who is invisible. He walked with him in prayer, and every other holy duty. He set the Lord God continually before him. Hence being in a state of friendship with God, he enjoyed the light of his countenance, and grace in conformity to his image, and rejoiced in the manifestations of his glory. The glories of the heavenly world rose with transcendent brightness on his view. Eternity was felt to be a solemn reality. And if we truly believe in Christ, shall not this be our experience, and this our hope? Amen.

PRAYER.

We desire, O God, to approach thy throne of mercy, this evening, in the belief that as a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity them that fear him. Thou hast given us innumerable proofs of thy fatherly compassion. With thee is the fountain of life. From thee cometh down every good and perfect gift. What heart can conceive, or what tongue can express, the extent of thy benignity, or the tenderness of thy love? From thy redeeming mercy has originated that wondrous scheme of salvation, which in the fullness of the time Christ Jesus, thine only begotten Son, died to accomplish. From thee also, proceedeth the grace which is necessary to bring in to the possession and enjoyment of this great salvation. We lament, O God, that whilst thou hast amply provided for the welfare of our never-dying souls, that we have been hitherto so blind to the glory of thy grace, and so indifferent to thy claims on our faith, and gratitude, and holy obedience. Unbelief has exerted a blighting influence on our souls. How prone are we to question the tidings of great joy which have reached our fallen world, and in the reception of which alone we can obtain spiritual life and healing. How slow to believe the testimony concerning thy Son. How unwilling to renounce

our own righteousness, and to submit wholly and unreservedly to the righteousness of God. Thy power alone can subdue our evil hearts of unbelief. We earnestly plead that that power may be put forth for our salvation. With thee nothing is impossible. Do thou, who with a word, hast created the world, create a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us. Do thou, O compassionate Redeemer, who didst give sight to the blind, open our understandings to understand the scriptures. And O thou Holy Spirit, whose office it is to glorify Christ, and to apply the benefits of his redemption, be pleased savingly to enlighten our souls, and to sanctify our hearts, and so to work in us effectually the work of faith with power, that like the saints of old, we may set our seal to God's testimony that he is true. O do thou increase our faith. May we daily live by faith on the Son of God. While contemplating his matchless excellencies, may we be changed from glory to glory, and obtain such cheering evidences of a personal interest in his salvation, as will enable us now, and at the hour of death, to say, I know in whom I believe, and am persuaded that he will keep that which I have committed to him unto that day. May this be the happy attainment of all. May the servants of Christ, our pastors, be enriched with this grace, that from personal experience they may be able to recommend the all-glorious Saviour to their flocks. May our friends and relations be blessed with the hope of glory. May all the world see the salvation of God. And now, O Lord, pardon all our sins, and grant us thy grace. All we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM X. 3. OF LXXV. 5.

SCRIPTURE—DANIEL IV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

This chapter contains the confession of a royal penitent, whose impious arrogance had been checked and cured by an awful judgment inflicted by the King of kings. It strikingly displays the danger to which despotic power exposes its possessor.

'Wherefore doth the wicked condemn God?' saith the psalmist; addressing himself to that omniscient Being who is the 'Watcher and the holy One,' he adds, 'Thou hast seen it, for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand.' The most high God 'who ruleth in the kingdom of men' had, by means of a significant dream, forewarned the haughty monarch of the terrible consequences with which his iniquity would be visited, unless his heart underwent an effectual change. His own conscience, indeed,

seems to have smitten him before he knew the full meaning of that dream, for he owns to Daniel that he 'was afraid,' and that 'the thoughts upon his bed, and the visions of his head, troubled him.'

Daniel, with great modesty, but with the unshrinking honesty which became him as a prophet of God, interpreted the allegorical appearance which had been made to pass before his royal master's mind. Calmly braving the violent temper of the despot, he manfully announced to him the frightful and unexpected downfall which the dream portended; and, faithful to his God as well as dutiful to his earthly king, concluded with urging the benevolent counsel contained in the 27th verse: 'Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor.' This advice he enforced by intimating his hope that the observance of it might 'be a lengthening of Nebuchadnezzar's tranquillity.'

To give the tyrant space for repentance, 'the judgment was not executed speedily.' A whole year of trial was granted to him; but at length he experienced the truth of the proverb, 'Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.' His reason and his kingdom departed from him, and the mighty monarch at whose frown the princes of so many nations and languages had trembled; he whose greatness had 'reached unto heaven, and his dominion to the end of the earth,' was degraded to the level of the beasts of the field, and wandered over the deserts, and through the howling wilderness, a houseless, loathsome, and miserable maniac.

The chastisement was severe, but salutary, and proved that even 'in wrath the Lord remembereth mercy.' The dispensation had assuredly not 'seemed to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto him who was exercised thereby.' And he 'blessed the Most High,' whom 'before he was afflicted,' he had set at nought. 'He praised and honoured him' who had abased him for his arrogance. And he gave the most convincing proof that he had deliberately relinquished his pride, when he prepared the penitential proclamation of which this chapter is composed, and sent it abroad 'unto all people, and nations, and languages, that dwelt in all the earth.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us avoid the vulgar error of envying those who 'Say to one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh;' and to a third, 'Do this, and he doth it.' Should we ourselves, in the course of providence, be invested with power, let us beware of its seductive and ruinous influence, lest our 'hearts being hardened with pride,' we should 'deny God, and say, Who is the Lord that we should serve him?' 'Let not the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth God, that he is the Lord which exerciseth judgment and righteousness in the earth.' Let us all remember who hath warned us that, 'if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'

We have good cause to rejoice that there is a vigilant 'Watcher, and an holy One' who 'doeth

according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.' And though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.' And when we have been smitten of God because of our rebellious dispositions, or when we hear the awful denunciation of divine judgments, let us instantly 'break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities' by repentance and conformity to the gospel of Christ, trusting that it will 'be a lengthening of our tranquillity.'

Finally, we ought to feel such confidence in the wisdom and justice of the divine administration that, whether worldly prosperity, or temporal adversity, be our lot, we may 'praise, and extol, and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment;' and we should never permit ourselves to forget that 'those who walk in pride he is able to abase.'

PRAYER.

Almighty God, we approach the footstool of thy throne with the deepest reverence; for thou art the Creator, the Preserver, and the Governor of all things. Thou knowest the proud afar off, but hast respect unto the lowly. O teach us to know ourselves, and the duties which become us as dependent and responsible creatures. In all thy dealings with us, may we delight to trace the operation of thy providence, and may we never presume to question thy wisdom, or thy goodness. May we shrink with horror from the thought of contemning the warnings of the most High, and of lifting ourselves up against the Lord of heaven. When thou triest us in the furnace of tribulation, may we come forth purified and refined, so that our light affliction, which is but for a moment, may work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. O God of mercy, if we yield to the corrupt propensities of our nature, and rebel against thy law, may our imaginations be speedily cast down, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and may every thought be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. For this purpose, we earnestly pray that we may be enabled to examine ourselves with scrupulous candour, and to see the plague of our own hearts. Give us deep contrition, and sincere repentance, together with a growing love to thee, and firm confidence in the sufficiency of the atonement and intercession of thy holy Son. Being thoroughly cleansed in the laver of regeneration, and strengthened with might from above, may we lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. And now, O Holy Father, before

we go forth to our several occupations, we humbly implore thee to bless us a family, and as individuals. May we all be knit together in the bands of mutual affection. May the heads of this house, feeling their great responsibility, endeavour, both by precept and example, to promote the growth of godliness in the hearts of those whom thy providence has committed to their charge. May the children be trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, walking in that good way from which they may not depart when they are old. May they learn obedience to their parents and superiors; and under wise and pious instructors, may they diligently improve their time and their talents. May the servants be honest and faithful, that they may adorn the doctrine of God and our Saviour in all things. Seeing thee who art invisible, may we this day undertake nothing on which we should be ashamed to ask thy blessing, and may all the duties in which we are severally to be engaged, be discharged under the solemn conviction that thou, God, seest us, and that we must answer to thee for all that we do or say. These our humble supplications, O our God, we present to thee in the name, and trusting in the merits of thy Son Jesus Christ our Redeemer, and our Advocate and Intercessor. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LIX.

SCRIPTURE—HEBREWS XII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The author of this epistle had observed with grief that many of his Hebrew converts were deterred from openly avowing their faith by the fear of persecution from their bigoted brethren. This was their besetting sin; and as it sadly impeded their progress in the Christian course, he here implores them to disentangle themselves from its fatal influence. With this view, in the xi. chapter, he shows them the heroic and unflinching fortitude which genuine faith had produced in the character of holy men whose characters were recorded for their instruction. Those illustrious believers he represents, by a bold figure of speech, as witnesses to the efficacy of faith, in availing itself of the power of God for their deliverance and support in trial. He then set before them the still more authoritative example of Jesus, the Son of God, whose name they bore, and whom they all acknowledged as the Author and Leader of their faith; of Jesus who, in the face of murderous foes, and with the perfect knowledge of all the agonies which awaited him, resolutely persevered in declaring the truth, till he had finished the generous work of redemption, enduring even the cross, and despising

the shame. For their encouragement, he reminds them that their crucified Master had entered into glory, and urges them, like him, to continue steadfast until death, seeing it will assuredly be followed by a life of endless and triumphant joy. And to prevent them from fainting under the apprehension that their tribulation was any proof of their heavenly Father's wrath, he assures them that, on the contrary, it was an evidence of his tender love. 'For,' says he, 'if ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons.' If properly improved, affliction will yield the 'peaceable fruit of righteousness.' He warns them, at the same time, to cultivate holy and meek dispositions; 'following peace with all men,' even with their persecutors. He demonstrates the great superiority of the Christian over the Mosaic dispensation, and sets before them the ruin which must inevitably overtake all who refuse to obey the voice of Jesus Christ, who 'speaketh from heaven' with divine authority, and is the Founder of a dispensation which shall never be charged.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

As God so loved us that he spared not his own Son, but gave him up to die for our salvation, we have abundant proof that he will not afflict us without good cause. We should therefore neither despise his chastening, nor sink under it; but, when exercised thereby, should earnestly pray that it may yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

Animated by the example of those who, 'through faith and patience, inherit the promises,' and remembering that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord;' let us search out and renounce our besetting sins, 'striving against' temptation, even in its most alluring forms, 'resisting,' if necessary, 'even unto blood,' and 'looking unto Jesus' as our teacher, our example, our intercessor, our Saviour, and our judge; carefully and jealously watching our corrupt hearts, 'lest any root of bitterness spring up' in them to mar our peace, and ruin our prospects for eternity.

Never can we be sufficiently grateful to God for having granted us the privilege of living under the dispensation of grace, a privilege which many prophets and righteous men in vain desired to enjoy. But let us never forget that our responsibility is just so much the greater, for 'unto whomsoever much is given, of him much will be required. Let us, then, pray for grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.' Let us hasten with humble docility to him that speaketh from heaven. 'This is my beloved Son,' said the divine voice which came out of the cloud on the mount of transfiguration, 'This is my beloved Son, hear him.' He is the Mediator of the new covenant, and through him alone can we be admitted into 'the general assembly of the church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.' But, O appalling thought, if we 'refuse him,' we shall find 'our God a consuming fire!'

PRAYER.

Our Father which art in heaven, before we retire to repose for the night, we kneel to thee

for thy blessing. We gratefully acknowledge the providential care by which thou hast preserved us amidst all the dangers, seen or unseen, to which we have been exposed since last we presented ourselves before thee as a family. We know that we are not worthy to receive the least of all thy mercies, and therefore, in imploring thy grace, we can plead only the merits of thy beloved Son, the Mediator of the new covenant, who in his infinite love, has undertaken to be our Advocate and Intercessor. May we be his disciples, not in name only, but in deed and in truth, hearing his voice with reverence, and cheerfully conforming to his will as revealed to us in the gospel. Of that gospel may we never be ashamed. As Christ loved us unto death, may we gratefully love him in return. As we are bought with a price, even with his precious blood, may we act as becometh the Lord's freemen, and glorify him in our body and in our spirit. As we hope that he will confess us before thee, his Father, may we never shrink from confessing him before men. O do thou enable us with the heart to believe unto righteousness, and with the mouth to make confession unto salvation, trusting in the declaration of thy servant that, if we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in our heart that thou raised him from the dead, we shall be saved. May thy Holy Spirit sanctify our hearts wholly, and strengthen us inwardly, that we may strive with success against our spiritual enemies, resisting even unto blood. When we faint do thou lift up the hands that hang down, and when weary with the struggles of our Christian course, do thou, O Lord, nerve our feeble knees, and make straight paths for our feet. Should it be our lot to suffer oppression, may we consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, and who said, Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. May we this night commune with our hearts upon our beds, and stand in awe that we sin not. May our meditations of thee be sweet, thy comforts refreshing our souls. Prepare us for the duties of the approaching sabbath. May we be in thy Spirit on the Lord's day, and withdrawing our thoughts and affections from the world, and the things of the world, may we fix them on the great Lord of the sabbath, and those things which are above. May we gratefully meditate on that glorious resurrection from the dead, of which the first day of the week is a lasting memorial in the Christian church, and

may we, being dead unto sin, be alive unto righteousness, and unto thee. May the close of every succeeding week find us further and further advanced towards the happy termination of our Christian race, until each of us shall be enabled to adopt the words of thy servant, and say, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at the great day. Heavenly Father, hear us, and acknowledge us as thy children, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only hope of glory. Amen.

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXI.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CXX. CXXI. CXXII.

REMARKS.

PSALM CXX. This and the fourteen psalms which follow are termed 'songs of degrees,' probably owing to the manner in which they were set to the music adapted to the temple service. This psalm is generally thought to have been composed by David when suffering under the calumnies of Doeg and others, ver. 1, 2. However great or complicated his distresses may be, the believer in Jesus has the assurance of God's word of truth that he shall be delivered out of them all. This assurance is immediately derived from the promises of God, and from the recorded experience of his servants. When our characters are calumniated by the ungodly, we may with confidence commit our case to him who 'judgeth righteously,' seeking to imitate the example, and to rely upon the sympathy and aid of that Redeemer, who, 'when he was reviled, reviled not again,' who, 'when he suffered, threatened not,' ver. 3, 4. Let us beware of backbiting and evil-speaking, which, though too common, alas! among mere professors of the gospel, is altogether inconsistent with the character of a humble follower of the Lamb. Slanderers, being malicious liars, 'shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone,' ver. 5—7. While we sojourn in the wilderness of this world, we cannot expect the enemies of God to be at peace with us; yet, still, if we are believers in the Prince of peace, we need not fear what men or devils can do unto us. 'In the world,' says Jesus, 'ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you.'

PSALM CXXI. Ver. 1—6. This psalm is probably intended to express the feelings of a godly Israelite journeying towards Jerusalem, that he might worship Jehovah in his holy place on mount Zion; and when beset with the perils of the moral wilderness, through which we are travelling to the New Jerusa-

lem, the city of the living God, well may we 'lift up our eyes' to heaven's 'everlasting hills' of holiness for that strength and 'help' which this sinful world can never afford. No creature in heaven or in earth can effectually succour us in the hour of need. Let us therefore look beyond and above the things that are created, to him who is the Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer of his people. Let us 'lift up our eyes' unto Jesus, the 'Rock of ages,' and we shall receive that aid which we require.

Ver. 7, 8. In our most important undertakings and severest trials, as well as in the more ordinary affairs of life, let us with humble confidence entrust ourselves to the ever-watchful care of him that 'keepeth Israel,' assured that whatever he may see fit to appoint with reference to our temporal interests, he will make 'all things work together' for the good of our souls.

PSALM CXXII. David here expresses his own gladness, and that of every true worshipper of Israel's God, when summoned to wait upon him in his appointed ordinances. And in a higher and more spiritual sense, these words are fitted to embody the sentiments of every real Christian. The believer is renewed after the image of God, and, therefore, amid the toil, and temptation, and impurity, of this fallen world, he feels that he is not in his proper element. The language of his care-wearied soul frequently is apt to be, 'O that I had the wings of a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest.' When Jesus prayed the Father in behalf of those who had been given him, he besought not that they should be removed out of the world, but that they might be 'kept from the evil.' The believer has an important work to perform. He must fight the good fight of faith without wavering, that thus he may prove a living witness of the might and mercy of God in his redemption from the power of sin. Now that the Christian soldier may be strengthened for the performance of this duty, God has placed the means of grace within his reach, and among these, the institution of the sabbath, and of sabbath ordinances, stand prominently forth. If we are sincere Christians, then, we shall be 'glad when it is said unto us, Let us go into the house of the Lord;' and shall love, and rejoice in, and pray for, the peace and prosperity of the church of Christ.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, in Christ our reconciled Father, we, thine unworthy creatures, would approach thee, on this the morning of thine own holy day, with humility as sinners, but with confidence as believers in Jesus. We would come before thee in the spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father. See, O God, our shield, look on the face of thine Anointed, and for his sake do thou accept our petitions, and vouchsafe unto us an answer in peace. We thank thee for all the temporal favours wherewith thou hast blessed us. More especially would we acknowledge thy mercy, O thou Shepherd of Israel, in that thou hast watched over and preserved us in safety

during the silence, darkness, and helplessness of the night which is gone, and hast once more brought us together as a family, in peace and comfort, to join in prayer around the domestic altar. On this thy day, O Lord, may we be in the Spirit, and may we be enabled to worship thee in spirit and in truth. We confess that we are sinners before thee exceedingly; we have no merit of our own to present unto thee; and by nature we have neither the will to love, nor the power to serve thee. But with thee all things are possible. God be merciful to us, sinners. We would lift up our eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh our help; our help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. Enable us to keep thy sabbath. May we regard it as the holy of the Lord, and honourable. Enable us to reverence thy sanctuary. May we consider a day in thy courts to be better than a thousand; and may we be glad when it is said unto us, Let us go into the house of the Lord. May all thy ministering servants this day experience the special presence and assistance of thy Holy Spirit, that they may be duly qualified rightly to divide the word of truth. More particularly would we pray for him who stately ministers unto us in holy things. May he come to us this day in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, and may we wait on his ministrations in an humble, teachable, prayerful, faithful spirit. Enable us, whether as masters, or parents, or children, or servants, to spend this day together in the public and private exercises of thy worship. May we find it to be a time of refreshing from thy presence, a foretaste of the happiness of heaven. We pray for our relatives, and for all who are dear to our hearts. May they be reconciled unto thee by the death of thy Son, and therefore, with us, be adopted into thy family, and have a right to all the privileges of thy children, both in time and throughout eternity. If we have enemies, do thou forgive them; may we be enabled to forgive them also; and may they and we be at length united in the unity of the Spirit, and in the bond of peace, having one Lord, one faith, one baptism. We beseech thee in behalf of our heathen brethren. O have respect unto the covenant, because the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. Bless the means which are used, in dependence on thy grace, for advancing the honour of thy name, and extending the limits of thy kingdom. May thine ancient people of Israel be brought to regard thee, not merely as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and

thus may all thy people be saved, and may the whole earth be filled with thy glory. We commit ourselves to thee. Be with us during this day, and at all times, to protect us by thy providence, to guard us in the hour of temptation, to comfort, enlighten, and sanctify us by thy Spirit. And throughout eternity, O God, be thou our all-satisfying portion. Hear our prayers, and forgive our sins, and bless us, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXV.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CXXIII. CXXIV. CXXV.

REMARKS.

PSALM CXXIII. So long as we turn not away our sight and our eyes from beholding, with admiring gaze, the follies and vanities of earth, we must be strangers to that 'perfect peace' which is the privilege of those whose minds are stayed upon God; and we shall find, to our cost, that the pleasures and the profits of the world are far from sufficient to satisfy our souls. Unless we can say, with Job, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee;' and with David, 'Unto thee lift I up my eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens,' we are not Christians. Let us therefore 'wait upon the Lord' in earnest, praying that we may be enabled, by a diligent study of his holy word, to ascertain what is his will concerning us, and how we may be rendered capable of obedience to its precepts; that 'God may send forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father;' that we may be taught entirely to depend on him as our all in all.

PSALM CXXIV. Here David rejoices in the great goodness of the Lord, who had delivered his people out of the hands of their temporal enemies. And as belonging to the spiritual 'Israel,' may not each one of us say, 'If it had not been the Lord who was on our side,' we should never have been delivered from the enemies of our soul's salvation, we must have been 'quickly swallowed up' in the gulf of eternal perdition. If we are Christians, if we have taken up our position against all that is hostile to God and to righteousness, we must have recognized in *satan*, the prince of this world, in the fallen world itself, with its varied terrors and temptations, and in our own corrupted and unbelieving hearts, the enemies of our real welfare, of our everlasting peace; we must have felt conscious that 'vain is the help of man,' and that 'he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool;' we must have thankfully acknowledged the completeness of the deliverance which the Lord hath wrought out for us, and, feeling our own helplessness, must have given him all the glory, in his having for us abolished death, spiritual and eternal, and taken away the sting of death temporal, in his having 'conquered him that had the power of death,

that is, the devil,' and in his having 'spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross.' Such being the state of our views, and sentiments, and feelings, in all our subsequent struggles, up to the hour when, at the close of this life's conflict, we shall lay down our spiritual weapons, that we may put on the kingly crown, in humility and in faith, the language of our souls shall be, 'Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.'

PSALM CXXV. We are told that 'the wicked are like the troubled sea that cannot rest;' and our Lord informs us that he who does not submit himself to the gospel, who receives not its promises, and regards not its precepts, 'is like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand.' Scripture and experience unite to teach us, that as well might we seek to rest securely on the shifting quicksand, or the deceitful ocean, as look for permanent tranquillity among 'the things which are seen, and temporal.' But the true Christian leans not on himself, or on any thing that earth can afford. He trusts in the Lord, as in Christ, 'redeeming him from all iniquity.' 'He is a Rock; his work is perfect.' On this solid foundation he securely builds. 'The covenant of the Lord's peace' shall never be 'removed' from mount Zion, and, therefore, each humble worshipper shall abide under the shelter of the Almighty. True, the Christian may be destined to meet with many earthly trials, and, if he continues faithful, he must expect to be despised and persecuted by the ungodly. But 'the rod of the wicked' shall not always 'rest upon his lot.' 'God will not suffer his people to be tempted above what they are able to bear.'

PRAYER.

Unto thee lift we up our eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Whom have we in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that we ought to desire besides thee. We thank thee for that holy rest which it has this day been our privilege to enjoy. We bless thee that, as a family and as individuals, we have been preserved from outward evil; that we have been permitted and commanded to turn away from the things that are seen and temporal, and to direct our believing regards to those things which are unseen and eternal. We gratefully acknowledge thy mercy in having called us this day into thy sacred courts, that we might worship thee according to thine own appointment. O Lord, grant an answer in peace to the prayers which we then presented at thy mercy-seat; and may the word which was preached unto us profit our souls, having been mixed with faith in us who heard it. But, alas, O Lord, we would confess that we have violated the sanctity of thy sabbath in thought, if not in word or deed. Pardon, we implore thee, the sins of our holy things. Grant us the spirit of true repentance. O send forth thy light and thy truth; let them lead

us, let them guide us. And if any good impression has been made upon our hearts, or if any good resolution has been formed by us in thy strength, may it be confirmed and rendered permanent, and may its fruit be unto holiness. Grant that the hallowed effect of our sabbath exercises, in public or in private, may be manifested in all we think, and say, and do, throughout the week on which we have entered, so that the world may take knowledge of us that we are advancing in our Christian course. We pray thee to bless thy church throughout the world. May her ministers be disinterested, devoted, and zealous in the cause of the Captain of our salvation. May her members be more consistent in their profession and in their practice, and more united to one another, growing up into him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ. May the glad tidings of salvation be proclaimed throughout every land. May sabbath privileges and gospel ordinances be observed and appreciated more and more in our own country. May the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing on his wings, so that, both among ourselves and in the dark and distant lands of heathenism, the wilderness and the solitary place may be made glad, and the desert may rejoice and blossom as the rose. We beseech thee to bless us as a family. May we, and all who are dear to our hearts, whether present or absent, be more and more closely united together on earth by the bonds of holy Christian love; and when all our sabbaths here below are ended, may we meet to part no more, and enjoy that eternal and unbroken rest which remaineth for thy people in heaven. Watch over us, we implore thee, throughout this night. Grant us that sleep which thou givest unto thy beloved. May thy arm of mercy and of might protect us from all temporal and spiritual evil. If thou art pleased to spare us till the light of morning, may we feel that we are still with thee; and in thy strength, and under thy blessing, may we go forth to the discharge of our week-day duties, not slothful in business, yet fervent in spirit, thus serving thee the Lord. Hear these, O God, our evening supplications, and when thou hearest, forgive, and accept of us, and bless us, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM xcvi. 1.

SCRIPTURE—DANIEL v.

REMARKS.

In this chapter, we have a striking instance of impiety and its punishment. The impiety was manifested by one, whom past experience might have taught to reverence the Lord of heaven and earth. Indeed, all who mock the majesty of the most High, are without excuse; but he whose sin and punishment are here recorded, was chargeable with the deepest ingratitude and guilt. Belshazzar was the son or grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, who had been made a striking monument of divine judgment and mercy. Yet instead of being warned by his example, Belshazzar proceeded to manifest the most deliberate and daring impiety. In the midst of a great feast, made, probably, for the purpose of proclaiming more widely his audacious wickedness, he brought forth the golden vessels which had been employed in the service of the temple at Jerusalem, and which had been sacrilegiously carried off by Nebuchadnezzar. From these consecrated vessels, he and his princes and his concubines drank wine, and in mad derision of the true God, praised the idols of wood and of stone which they worshipped. In the midst of their impious carousals, a hand came forth, and wrote upon the wall a doom, which none of the Chaldeans could read or interpret, but which, even in its inscrutable mysteriousness, smote the prince and his nobles with terror and dismay. The queen-mother, who seems not to have been present at their profane revelry, entered the banquet house, in consequence of the panic which spread throughout the palace. She recollected the services of Daniel, upon a former occasion, and recommended that he should now be sent for; and thus the servant of that God whom Belshazzar had insulted, became the instrument of denouncing his ingratitude and impiety, and of foretelling the swift judgment with which they would be visited. Because he had known the pride and the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar, and had not humbled his heart; but, on the contrary, had lifted himself up against the most High, and had desecrated the vessels dedicated to the worship of the true God, by employing them in the service of idolatry and licentiousness, therefore Daniel was commissioned to declare unto him that he had been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; and that now his kingdom would be taken from him, and given to the Medes and Persians. Similar predictions had previously been uttered by the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah; and the fulfilment of them is attested by profane historians.

From this passage of holy writ, we may learn, that pride and impiety are sure to provoke the divine wrath; and that if we neglect the warnings which God gives, by the punishment which he sends upon others, we shall draw down heavier judgment upon ourselves. Nebuchadnezzar sinned, and was punished; but because he repented, his reason and his kingdom were restored to him. Belshazzar

neglected this warning, and he was cut off without any farther opportunity of repentance. These things happened as ensamples; and 'except we repent, we shall all likewise perish.'

PRAYER.

Almighty God! it is good for us at all times to wait upon thee, to show forth thy praise, and to declare thy loving-kindness. Thou art a great God, and a great King, above all gods; and we are thy feeble and dependent creatures. We rejoice, however, to know that, in the plenitude of thy bliss, and the sufficiency of thy nature, thou art not unmindful of the wants and the weaknesses of those beings whom thou hast made; for we, the children of men, have been the objects of a salvation into which even the angels desire to look. We had destroyed ourselves, but in thee was our help found. Thou wast pleased to send thy Son from heaven, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have everlasting life. And we pray, O Lord, that the great end for which Christ came may be fully answered in us. May we all believe on him to the saving of our souls. May we have that faith which purifieth the heart, and worketh by love, which is without partiality, and without hypocrisy, full of mercy, and of good fruits. May we be enabled to walk worthy of the high and holy vocation wherewith thou hast called us, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, by a life and conversation becoming the gospel. We pray for all whom we ought to remember before thee. Give repentance and resignation to the sick, help and deliverance to the persecuted and the needy, support and comfort to the aged and the dying. Speak peace to those who are troubled in mind. Give them a true knowledge of thee, and of their duty, and deliver them from all groundless fears and causeless scruples. Bless our friends, reward our benefactors, forgive our enemies, and grant, we beseech thee, that the time may soon come, when, by the universal diffusion, and influence of the gospel of peace, all discord and dissension shall cease, when men shall walk together as brethren, and celebrate, by lives of unity and forbearance, the praises of thee, who art a God forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. We thank thee for all that goodness and mercy which thou art continually making to pass before us. We beseech thee to continue to us the many blessings which we already enjoy, and to turn away from us the many evils which our negligence and provocation may deserve. As thou art adding to our days, and multiplying upon us thy mercies, be pleased to grant us increase of grace and perseverance in holiness, that, as we are drawing

nearer to our end, we may be growing more meet for the inheritance of thy heavenly kingdom. And unto thee, who alone art able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the throne of thy glory, with exceeding joy, we would ascribe dominion and praise, through Jesus Christ.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LX.

SCRIPTURE—HEBREWS XIII.

REMARKS.

This chapter contains a series of observations upon subjects, which may at first seem to be detached; yet a close and intimate connection may be traced in the several sections of which it consists.

Ver. 1—4. It begins with an exhortation to cherish brotherly love. Of this feeling the natural fruits, in the circumstances in which the early Christians were placed, would be hospitality to strangers, and sympathy with the persecuted and afflicted. According to many critics, ver. 4. should be translated, 'Let marriage be honoured, and the bed undefiled;' and in this view of it, personal purity and self-restraint might be regarded as the fruit of brotherly love, and as an illustration of the connection which subsists between all the virtues; just as in the following portion of the chapter we have an illustration of the connection between faith and holiness.

Ver. 5—16. Christians are here cautioned against covetousness, and encouraged to contentment, on the ground of the divine promise. The means or instrument by which we lay hold of the promises of God is faith; and hence the apostle exhorts us to hold fast the great and unchanging verities of our religious belief; and instead of occupying ourselves with new or strange doctrines, or with subordinate and trifling discussions, to seek rather to have our hearts established with grace—brought under the gracious and powerful influence of the truth. The belief of the truth is the only principle able to support us under all the trials to which we may here be exposed, and to sustain and cheer us in rendering a joyful service unto God, and in showing kindness to our fellow-men.

Ver. 17—21. The church being the ground and pillar of the truth, and its ministers being appointed to preserve the doctrines, and dispense the grace of the gospel, the apostle exhorts Christians to obey them that have rule over them. The solemn responsibility under which they watch for souls, is adduced as an argument for submission. But to show that the obedience of Christians to their spiritual rulers is not blind and implicit, the apostle proceeds to request from those whom he is addressing, an interest in their prayers, with a special view to his being more speedily restored to them. And in testimony of the deep and earnest desire which he had for their welfare, and of the interchange of

communion which he sought to establish with them at a throne of grace, he concludes with a solemn supplication that the great end of the everlasting covenant may be accomplished in their spiritual perfection.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who hast set thy glory above the heavens, we thy feeble and dependent creatures bow before thee. We know that we cannot be profitable to our Maker, and that our goodness can never extend itself unto thee, the Lord. But thou, in great kindness, hast invited us to approach thee with the voice of supplication and thanksgiving. Moved by our necessities, and encouraged by thy mercy, we seek, this evening, to shelter ourselves under the shadow of thy wings. Thou art rich in mercy to all who call upon thee in sincerity and truth, and savest such as are of a contrite heart. Day by day we have reason to magnify and bless thy worthy name. Thy mercies are new to us every morning, they are repeated to us every evening; great is thy faithfulness. We cannot praise thee according to the riches of thy grace; and thy favours towards us have risen up into a sum of blessing which we are unable to compute. Imprint, we beseech thee, and preserve upon our minds, a deep and lasting sense of thy mercies, that so we may yield ourselves up to thy service, and walk before thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives. Kindle the flame of thy love within us. Break every tie which may detain us from thee, our chief good, and melt our whole souls into a compliance with thy will. Give us such views of thy kindness and love to us, as may lead us more and more to honour and to obey thee. Instruct us in the knowledge of our duty to thee, our God, to our neighbour, and to our own souls. Preserve us from the temptations of the world, and from the deceitfulness of our own hearts. Excite in us a constant watchfulness against sin, and an eager desire after holiness. Help each of us to reform whatever may be amiss in our temper, or in our conduct, and what we know not, do thou teach us. Guide us, by thy good Spirit, in the way of faith and holiness, and give us grace to order our conversation as becometh the gospel. Endue us with that wisdom which cometh from above, which is pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, so that all of us may be inoffensive in our deportment, faithful and diligent in the discharge of our several duties, and adorned with those virtues and graces which thou delightest in. As thou hast given to us thy Son to be both a sacrifice for our sins, and

an example of godly living, give us grace truly to receive this inestimable benefit, and faithfully to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life. And do thou strengthen and uphold us, that we may not only be kept from falling, but may go on from one degree of grace and of improvement to another, till at length we come to be presented faultless, before the throne of thy glory, with exceeding joy. Extend thy mercy to all mankind, and be pleased to bring them to the knowledge and obedience of thy will. Look with compassion upon all who are in affliction. Give them patience and comfort under it, and in thy good time a joyful deliverance. We bless thee for thy patience towards us, notwithstanding our many provocations. Accept of our united expressions of gratitude for this day holding our souls in life, and turning away from us the many evils to which we are liable. Into thy hands we commend our spirits during the silent watches of the night. Lighten our darkness, that we may not sleep the sleep of death. Refresh our bodies with quiet rest, and our souls with the consolations of thy Spirit; and when we awake in the morning, may we still find ourselves with thee. And now, Almighty God, who art always more ready to hear than we are to pray, and who givest us more than we deserve or ask, deal not with us according to our imperfect supplications; but pardon our offences, pity our infirmities, consider our necessities, and pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy, through Jesus Christ.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 8

SCRIPTURE—DANIEL VI.

REMARKS.

Of all the passions which agitate the breast of man, there is no one more hateful in itself, or more hurtful in its consequences, than envy. 'A sound heart is the life of the flesh; but envy is the rottenness of the bones. Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?'

Because an excellent spirit was in Daniel, and he had explained what had baffled all the wise men of Babylon, it pleased Darius to prefer him above all the princes and presidents of his empire. This promotion of Daniel provoked their envy, and they sought to find occasion against him. Such, however, were his faithfulness and discretion, in the high duties of his office, that even their malice and ingenuity could find nothing to lay hold of. Despairing of finding any fault concerning the administration of the kingdom, they laid a snare for him, in reference to

his religion, the observances of which he inflexibly adhered to, in the midst of surrounding idolatry. Under the appearance of magnifying the power and majesty of Darius, his princes and governors agreed to make a decree that, for the space of thirty days, no petition should be made to either god or man, save to himself, under pain of being cast into the den of lions. With all the forms of oriental flattery, they approached the king, and requested that he would give his irrevocable sanction to this decree. The king fell into the snare which his nobles had laid, and the decree was signed with the royal seal. But all this could neither shake the fortitude nor restrain the piety of Daniel, who prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime. This was construed into contempt of the royal authority, and a violation of the royal decree, and the nobles urged the king to inflict punishment on this rebellious son of the captivity of Judah. The king now saw the snare into which he had been led, and exerted all his influence to deliver Daniel from the danger which threatened him. But even the royal prerogative could not reach this case. According to the constitution of the kingdom, a decree, which had been agreed on by the nobles, and sanctioned by the king, could not be summarily abrogated. The nobles pressed, with unrelenting malice, the advantage which they had gained, and, as a violator of their perfidious decree, Daniel was cast into the den of lions. But the God whom he served is he of whom it is written, 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.' The lions, less cruel than the envious men who had cast him into their den, spared the prophet, and did not return to their native fierceness till they received as their prey those perfidious men who deceitfully accused Daniel, and misled their prince. Punishment fell upon themselves, deliverance was wrought for Daniel, and the glory of the true God was extended.

This incident furnishes a striking illustration of the scripture, which saith of the wicked man, 'Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate. I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high.'

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who formest the light and createst the darkness, the day is thine, and the night also is thine. All thy works praise thee, and thy saints do magnify thy name. We desire this morning to join our voices unto theirs in ascribing unto thee all glory and honour, and in acknowledging that we are thy dependent creatures. By thee we were made, and by thee we have been preserved. It is owing entirely to thy goodness and mercy that we have been furnished with the comforts and advantages of this life, and with the hopes and expectations of

a better through Jesus Christ. Every thing we enjoy, and every thing to which we can aspire, flows to us from thine unmerited bounty. Accept, we beseech thee, of our unfeigned thanks for all the benefits which thou hast been pleased to bestow upon us, and pardon our great unworthiness of what thou hast done for us. Impress us with a deep sense of thy love to us, and lead us more and more to honour and to obey thee. Making it our daily care to do the things which thou hast commanded, may we preserve a settled peace of conscience, a sure trust in thy providence, and a joyful hope of everlasting life. With this hope may we purify ourselves, even as thou art pure. May we put away from us all envy, and malice, and evil-speaking, with every dishonest view and every wicked intention, and be careful to cultivate the virtues and graces which thou hast enjoined. May we see and feel the reasonableness and propriety of the commandment to be holy, even as thou who hast called us art holy. May we consider the exceeding riches of that grace which thou hast promised to all who ask it in sincerity and truth. May we remember that, although in ourselves we are weak, yet that in thee, the Lord, there is both righteousness and strength. May we, therefore, take to ourselves the whole armour of God, fight the good fight of faith, and study to be strong in the Lord and in the power of thy might. May thy word be our rule, thy Spirit our guide and helper, thy goodness our pattern and example, thy promises our encouragement, and thy joys our everlasting recompense and reward. And do thou, O God of peace, who broughtest again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the flock, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work, working in us that which is well-pleasing in thy sight. The blessings which we seek for ourselves, we would also supplicate for others. Turn the wicked and the careless from the evil and security of their ways, that they may live and not die. Make them to see and feel that the wages of sin is death, and stir them up to seek the gift of eternal life which is through Jesus Christ. May the sick, and the sorrowful, and the dying, find thee to be their stay and trust. Make us all more sensible of the frailty of our nature and the precariousness of our condition, and enable us more fully to fix and stay ourselves on thee and on thy laws. Accept of our united expressions of gratitude for thy good providence over us during the past night, and for every thing comfortable in our present condition. As thou hast been pleased to bring us

to the light of another day, let it prove to us a day of grace and favour. Keep us continually in thy fear and service, and preserve us to thy heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLVII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—JAMES I.

REMARKS.

Two persons of the name of James are mentioned in the New Testament history. The one was the son of Zebedee, and brother to John; and was called James the Greater. He is mentioned Matt. iv. 21. In the book of Acts (xii. 1, 2.) we read that he was killed by Herod, about the beginning of the reign of Claudius Cæsar, in the year of our Lord 44. The dispersion of the Jews did not take place till after this; so that James the Greater could not be the writer of this epistle. The other James was the son of Alphaeus, and brother to the apostles Simon and Jude. He was himself an apostle, and was generally called James the Less. In the epistle to the Galatians (i. 19.) he is called the brother of our Lord; because he was the kinsman of Christ according to the flesh; and the Jews denoted various degrees of consanguinity by the general term brother. In the second chapter of that same epistle, he is called a pillar or leading apostle. It is said that he was appointed the first pastor over the church at Jerusalem, which he governed, with great praise, for the space of thirty years, and at last suffered martyrdom by being cast from a pinnacle of the temple.

The Jews, to whom this epistle is more immediately addressed, were scattered and persecuted. James, as their kinsman, endeavours to console them, and, as their spiritual teacher, he calls on them to rejoice. He soothes their wounded feelings by a kindly salutation, and animates their Christian hopes by pointing to the improvement which they might derive from their afflictions. 'My brethren,' says he (ver. 2.) 'count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.' He proceeds to show that the trials and afflictions of this life are fitted and designed to promote the growth of the Christian graces, and the perfection of the Christian character. They are appointed by a wise and a gracious God, who hath promised to give direction and help to all who faithfully ask him. It is not his will that we should sink under trial, or fall under temptation, but rather that we should resist and overcome. We should, therefore, guard against any dark or injurious views of the character of God, and regard him as the rich and unchanging source of every good and perfect gift. The apostle reminds those whom he is addressing that they had already received from him the gift of regeneration. He calls on them to consider the high and holy ends for which this gift had been conferred, and to value and improve the ministrations of that word by which it had originally been conveyed, and by which it was to be maintained and perfected

within them. He exhorts them to lay apart all dispositions and practices which were inconsistent with the right reception and the fruitful operation of the engrafted word; to guard against all hypocrisy and self-deceit; to look steadfastly to that perfect law of liberty into which they had been delivered, that so they might see the joyful service which was expected of them, and continue therein. He animates them to this clear and consistent course by assuring them that its end would be blessed; and he warns them against instability and insincerity, by assuring them that before him with whom they had to do, mere professions and appearances would be altogether unavailing, and that without personal purity and brotherly love, true godliness cannot exist.

Let us learn, then, to bear with patience and fortitude the trials which may be appointed us; to rely with confidence on the unchanging goodness of God; to receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls; and endeavour to purify our heart and life according to its precepts.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, who art the hope and confidence of all ends of the earth, we desire this evening to approach thee with the voice of supplication and thanksgiving. We bless and magnify thy worthy name for all that goodness and mercy which thou hast been making to pass before us ever since we had a being. We thank thee for the rank which thou hast assigned to us among thine intelligent creatures. We thank thee that thou hast endowed us with the powers of reason and understanding, and hast made us capable of knowing, of loving, and of serving thee, who art the source of all happiness, and the centre of all perfection. We lament that even our best services should be inferior to thy purity and excellence; and still more deeply do we lament that, instead of serving thee with a perfect heart and a willing mind, we should so often have wandered from that path of peace and of duty which thou hast prescribed unto us. We have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and are not worthy to be called thy children. We rejoice, however, that there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared, and plenteous redemption that thou mayest be sought after. This is thy name and thy memorial unto all generations, the Lord merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and slow to wrath, keeping covenant and mercy with them that love thee. We rejoice in the gracious assurance that thou wast in Christ reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. In his name, and for his sake, we implore from thee the pardon of our past offences, and grace to help us in our future life. Teach us carefully to redeem the time which we have lost, and diligently to

improve those means of grace with which thou art still pleased to favour us. As pilgrims and strangers, may we pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, looking for a house eternal in the heavens. While we are in the world, may we keep ourselves from the evil which is in the world, and study to perfect holiness in thy fear. May we remember that this life is the preparation for immortality, the time which thou hast appointed for working out our salvation; and that, if we here neglect to exercise that faith, and to follow after that holiness which thou requirest, we cannot hereafter obtain that happiness which thou hast promised, for there is no work, nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge, in the grave, whither we are hastening. To-day, therefore, while it is yet called to-day, may we hearken to thy voice, as the night cometh wherein no man can work. May we give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. May we seek thee the Lord while thou art to be found; may we call upon thee while thou art near, before our feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and the things which belong to our eternal peace be for ever hid from our eyes. We pray not for ourselves only, but beseech thee to be merciful to all men, and to give them grace truly to repent of their sin, that they may receive forgiveness and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. Bountifully reward all from whom we have received any good, and graciously forgive those who have done or wished us any harm. We pray for those who are related to us by the ties of friendship and of blood. Give them the fear of thy name and a sense of thy mercy. Keep them contented with their condition, and steadfast in their obedience. Hear their prayers for us, and our prayers for them; and grant that, although here we may be separated by distance, and must at last be separated by death, we may meet in thy heavenly kingdom to celebrate the praises of thee, who hast been known as a refuge throughout all generations. We thank thee for thy providential goodness towards us through the past day, and for every thing comfortable in our present condition. Defend us through the darkness of the night and the unconsciousness of sleep. Keep thy fatherly hand ever about us; let thy Holy Spirit ever be with us; and do thou so guide and govern us in the knowledge and obedience of thy will, that finally we may attain to the inheritance of thy heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 7.

SCRIPTURE—DANIEL VII.

REMARKS.

This chapter, with which the prophecies of Daniel begin, may be divided into two parts; the vision which Daniel saw, and the interpretation of it, which he received from one of those 'ministering spirits' who stood by him, ver. 16.

The four beasts are explained as representing the four kings or kingdoms, which should successively 'arise out of the earth,' and to which the church of God should be brought into subjection, previously to the establishment of Christ's kingdom, under the last of them, the fourth, viz. the Roman, which latter event also is foretold, ver. 18. And thus far Daniel's vision corresponds with Nebuchadnezzar's dream, chap. ii. The fourth kingdom, however, besides being coeval with the coming of Christ, and the introduction of Christianity, was to differ from all its predecessors in this respect, that ten kings or kingdoms, ver. 24. were to arise out of it, that another, an eleventh, should arise 'after' or behind them, i. e. unperceived by them. And that by it, though wholly diverse from the former, three kingdoms should be subdued.

This, it cannot be doubted, is a distinct prediction of the papacy, and the facts of history both explain and fulfil it. The 'horn,' or kingdom of papacy, grew out of the Roman empire, after its ten-fold division; it differed from all other kingdoms, in that it was at first entirely ecclesiastical or spiritual, not openly claiming temporal jurisdiction until several centuries after its establishment, when it had become strong enough to enforce the claim. And ultimately, in the eighth century, it succeeded in reducing three states or kingdoms into subjection to the papal chair, which the pope retains at the present day. So that, in the words of bishop Newton, 'The pope, by wearing his triple crown, hath in a manner pointed out for himself the person here intended!'

The *character* of the 'man of sin' is also depicted, ver. 25. and depicted with equal fidelity. 'He shall speak great words against the most High,' referring to his blasphemous assumption of the name, and attributes, and worship of Jehovah, 'exalting himself as God,' and 'sitting in the temple of God,' and he shall wear out the saints of the most High,' referring to the papal massacres and the inquisition, and 'shall think,' or presume, 'to change times and laws,' to interfere both with the positive and moral duties of religion, referring to those papal decrees, by which, in a variety of ways, the obligation of the law of God has been 'made void,' and the authority of scripture superseded, by which 'the mystery of iniquity' has been permitted 'to work' so long, and so fatally, to the subversion of the truth, and the ruin of souls.

The *duration* of this power, however, blessed be God, is limited, and is fixed, ver. 25. 'The saints shall be given into his hand,' i. e. shall be subject to, or shall be called to contend against his domination, 'until a time, and times,' and 'the dividing,' or 'the half' 'of a time,' a prophetic period, corresponding

in all probability with that referred to, once and again, in the apocalypse, in connection with the same subject; a thousand, two hundred, and threescore days,' or 'forty and two months,' which, according to the rule of prophetic interpretation, allowing each day to stand for a year, is equivalent exactly to 'a time,' or year of prophetic days, 'and times, and half a time,' in other words, to a period of twelve hundred and sixty years. That is the duration of the papacy; 'hitherto shall it come, and no farther!' We cannot, indeed, tell precisely when this period began, nor consequently, when it shall reach its termination; it is not intended that we should, but, without question, whatever date may be fixed upon, as the 'coming up of the little horn,' its course is already well nigh run; its fall, its destruction is at hand, for when the time has come for 'the saints to possess the kingdom,' ver. 22. for 'Messiah the Prince to rule,' then, ver. 11. 'the beast shall be slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame,' ver. 26. 'The judgment shall sit, and the saints shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.' 'The Lord shall consume that Wicked with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming,' 2 Thess. ii. 8.

And this destruction of antichrist will not be an isolated event. It will be coeval, or ready, so we have reason to believe from another part of this book, chap. xii. 1. with the gathering in again of the Jews, 'the children of God's people,' and that, the apostle Paul tells us, whensoever it may be accomplished, will be to the Gentile world as 'life from the dead,' Rom. xi. 15. imparting a new and mightier impulse than it has ever yet received, since the days of primitive effusion, to the church's missionary enterprise, and so hastening on the arrival of that blessed jubilee of the earth, when, ver. 27. 'the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.'

PRAYER.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is done in heaven. We rejoice to know that thou reignest, and that the great Messiah reigns, that the government of the world and of the church is upon his shoulder, and that he must reign until he hath made all his enemies his footstool. We are naturally thine enemies, O God, and his; our hearts are rebellious, our wills are perverse, there is none of us that doeth good. We deserve to be dealt with as thine enemies, to be denounced and punished for our rebellion; thou wouldst be just in judging, clear in condemning us. But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared; judgment is thy strange work, thou delightest in mercy. We bless thee for Jesus, our Peacemaker, and for the assurance of thy love through

him. O Lord, we will praise thee; though thou wast angry with us, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest us. May we enjoy more and more largely the peace of believing. May we know our election of God. May we have the inward witness testifying our adoption. Say unto our souls, I am your salvation. And, Lord, we would desire to have the spirit as well as the privileges of thy children. We would seek to be made dutiful, submissive, humble, anxious to know, and willing to do all that thou requirest of us. There is much rebelliousness still lurking in our souls, much pride, self-will, self-seeking, self-glorying. O for deliverance from these accursed things; O to be thoroughly subdued by thy grace; to have our every thought brought into captivity. Draw us, Lord, and we will run after thee. Turn us, O Lord, and we shall be turned; for thou art the Lord our God. And do thou multiply, we beseech thee, more and more, every day the number of the faithful. We hail the blessed prospects thou hast opened up in the sure word of prophecy for the world in which we live, covered as it now is with darkness, and groaning beneath the bondage of corruption. Hasten thou their fulfilment, condescend to own and prosper every scriptural means employed with a view to this high end; let Jew and Gentile be made one in Christ; let antichrist be overthrown, and may every plant be rooted up which our heavenly Father hath not planted. Be favourable to our land; return and visit us, as in days of old; revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy. Accept our morning tribute of praise for all thy bountiful kindness. To thy care we would commend ourselves; during this day preserve us from evil, preserve us, especially, from sin. Help us to realize thy presence continually, to maintain the remembrance of thee in our minds, to walk before thee in the land of the living. And do thou so replenish our souls with a sense of thy love to us in Christ Jesus, that we shall be raised above the influence of every meaner affection, and shall be constrained to run in the way of thy commandments, rejoicing in thy name all the day. Lead us in thy way, and teach us, for thou art the God of our salvation, on whom we desire continually to wait. We ask all for Jesus' sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 19.

SCRIPTURE—DANIEL VIII.

REMARKS.

The vision of the ram and he-goat contained in this chapter, as explained by the angel Gabriel, ver. 20—25. refers to the Persian and Grecian monarchies, and in its general outline admits of easy verification.

1. The ram with the two horns is the Medo-Persian empire, under Cyrus and his successors.

2. The 'he-goat,' is 'the king' or kingdom of Greece, and the 'first king' of that kingdom; 'the great horn between its eyes,' is unquestionably Alexander the Great, by whom the 'ram was smitten, and his two horns broken,' i. e. the Persian empire, in both divisions of it, subdued and taken.

3. After his death, it is well known his kingdom was subdivided into four smaller monarchies, under four of his commanders; this accords with the prediction of ver. 22.; and,

4. 'In the latter time of their kingdom,' another king was to stand up, 'a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences,' whose power should be mighty. This was fulfilled in the person of Antiochus Epiphanes, the great enemy of the Jews, whose power and policy are foretold, ver. 11, 12, 24, 25. and who, in accordance with that prophecy, 'magnified himself against the Prince of the host,' 'the Lord God of Israel,' profaned the temple, took away the 'daily sacrifice,' and 'gave both the sanctuary' and its attendant ministers 'to be trodden under foot.'

A part of this prophecy, however, seems to have a further reference, and, like that which precedes it, to point forward to a period still future. What Antiochus was to the Jewish church, that 'the man of sin,' 'the beast out of the bottomless pit' has been, and is, to the Christian. 'He has destroyed wonderfully, he has prospered, and practised, and has destroyed,' or made havoc, 'among the mighty ones, the people of the saints.' Also through his policy, he 'caused craft,' or fraud, 'to prosper in his hand, and he has magnified himself in his heart,' and in times of tranquillity has destroyed multitudes, 'even against the Prince of princes, has he stood up' and 'magnified himself.' The prophecy may thus be regarded as a double one, including both the type and the antitype, and with this latter view corresponds even more exactly than with the former, the period specified during which the hostile power should be allowed to prevail, ver. 14. 'Unto two thousand three hundred days.' Literally, these 'days' were accomplished in the experience of the Jewish people, before 'the sanctuary was cleansed.' Of this there can be no doubt, though there is some difficulty in tracing the chronology of an age now so far remote. But viewing them prophetically, as in the foregoing chapter, (each day representing a year), we may regard them as indicating an event which has not yet taken place, viz. the destruction of Antichrist; and thus the prediction of this chapter.

though dating from a different period, will be found to harmonize with that of the preceding, at once confirming its certainty, and also our interpretation of it. 'The two thousand three hundred days,' if dated, as bishop Newton supposes they ought to be, from the time of Alexander's invading Asia, 334 years before Christ, will correspond almost to a unit with the '1,260 days,' or years, there specified; and since we know whatever be the exact space of time indicated by these numbers, it has long ago begun its course, and is now advancing, we are furnished with a two-fold argument, instead of a single one; and an argument all the stronger, that the coincidence between the two prophecies is apparently undesigned, for cherishing the assured hope of what God has then promised to do, of the deliverance of his church from oppression, and the triumph of that spiritual kingdom which is to 'stand for ever.'

PRAYER.

O God, do thou deliver us from self-deceit and hypocrisy, from every secret sin. May we be sincere and upright before thee; may we be pure in heart within. Thou knowest how prone we are to flatter ourselves in our own eyes; to be satisfied with a name to live; to say, Peace, when there is no peace. And we confess, most gracious God, that we have been chargeable with much insincerity, and manifold inconsistencies, both in our conduct towards thee, and towards our fellow-men. We have said that we have faith, yet our faith has not wrought by love, nor has it purified our hearts, nor has it enabled us to overcome the world. It has been at the best feeble and fluctuating, and often, alas! has given place to the evil heart of unbelief, leading us to depart from thee, the living God. Yet, Lord, we would believe, we would desire above all things, to have the precious faith of thine elect, that faith which unites the soul to Christ, and which by uniting, assimilates, conforms it to his image. Do thou by thy Holy Spirit increase our faith. May Christ dwell in our hearts by faith, and be formed in us the hope of glory. May the same mind be in us that was also in Christ Jesus, who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might become rich; who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; who pleased not himself. Like him, may we be humble, condescending, forgiving, enduring, loving one another out of a pure heart, fervently; yea, walking in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. May we be living epistles of Christ, seen and read of all. Be pleased, gracious Father, to forgive wherein this day we have sinned against thee, in the intercourse with each other, or with

the world. Alas! the sins even of a day are too many for us to bear; wert thou to mark iniquity, we could not stand. But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. We would have recourse, anew, to the blood of Jesus, which cleanseth from all sin. May we be washed, and justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. To thy fatherly protection we commit ourselves during the ensuing night, giving thee thanks for the mercies which this day thou hast bestowed upon us, and trusting in the continuance of thy favour. May the eternal God be our refuge, and underneath us the everlasting arms. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, &c.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 33.

SCRIPTURE—JAMES II.

REMARKS.

The practical and holy tendency of the gospel is here, as throughout the whole of this epistle, strongly enforced, James's design being not opposite to, but different from Paul's; not to show what the gospel is, but what it does; not what it is, as revealed by God, but what it does as believed and obeyed by man. The principles of the gospel are unfolded in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians; its practice, 'the pure and undefiled religion' of which it is the source, is delineated here.

1. The apostle condemns the sin of 'partiality,' especially as exemplified in the 'respect' shown to 'the rich,' to the disparagement of the poor, in Christian assemblies. This sin, comprehending, of course, every thing in the conduct of Christians that bears a resemblance to it, he condemns, as at direct variance with 'the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 'the Lord of glory,' ver. 1., which unites all believers in one body, which recognizes no distinction between them but that of brotherhood, which owns no superiority of one above another, save in respect of that spiritual excellency or 'glory' which is received from him; as a sin, of which every genuine disciple, in as far as he possesses the Spirit of Christ, must be self-convicted, so that he cannot fail to be conscious in himself of his partiality to be 'a judge of his own evil thoughts,' ver. 4., as a sin which openly dishonours God, by depreciating those whom he exalts, by despising, for their poverty, those whom he has endowed with 'his durable riches and righteousness,' ver. 5.; and as a sin for which of all others there is the least apology, as committed in deference to a class of persons, by whom spiritually the followers of Christ have never been laid under obligation, by whom they have been often oppressed and persecuted, 'drawn before the judgment-seats,' and committed at the expense of those by whom at least

they have never been injured, many of whom have been their 'helpers in Christ Jesus,' and all of whom ought to be regarded by them as their friends, ver. 6, 7.

2. The apostle traces up the sin, thus exposed, to its source, and proves that while the gospel condemns it, the law, 'the royal law' of love, condemns it also. That law requires us indeed 'to love our neighbours as ourselves;' to love, therefore, even 'the rich, who oppress' us, and 'despitefully use and persecute us.' But while it requires us to love them as 'our neighbours,' it does not require us to love them because they are 'rich,' or powerful, or capable of advancing our worldly interests. On the contrary, the very generality of the term employed in reference to our fellow men, when they are described simply as 'our neighbours,' proves, that when, to serve a purpose, and at the sacrifice of our consistency, we confine our 'respect' to the few, at the expence of the many, we are not obeying the law of God, but gratifying the evil inclinations of our own minds; thus we are convicted of the law as 'transgressors,' and 'whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.' This is the apostle's argument, ver. 8—12.

3. Having thus denounced the sin of 'partiality,' he proceeds to expose that 'hypocrisy,' with which it is associated, chap. iii. 17. and under the covert of which it seeks to find shelter; the 'hypocrisy' of those who because scripture teaches that we are 'justified by faith alone,' content themselves with possessing a faith which is alone, which is 'without works,' either to prove or to recommend it. This he shows, 1. To be at variance with sound reason, as would be the supposition that words and deeds of charity are of equal value, that words dissociated from deeds are of any value at all, ver. 15, 16. 2. It is at variance with analogy; unproductive faith is no better in men than in devils; their faith is speculatively correct so far as it goes, yet, instead of bringing them nearer to God, as true faith does, and so imparting enjoyment, it only increases their alienation from him, and aggravates their misery, ver. 18, 19. And, 3. It is at variance with scriptural history and example; the examples of Abraham and Rahab; the former the most distinguished, the latter 'one of the least,' among those by whom, of old, faith is said to have been possessed. Both of them, it is true, were justified, obtained the approbation of God, in virtue of their faith only; this the apostle Paul demonstrates in reference to Abraham, Rom. iv. 3. quoting the same expression from Genesis, used here, ver. 23. and James does not deny it; but both of them also 'were justified by works,' i. e. they were justified before men, their faith was proved to be genuine, it justified itself, 'it wrought with their works, and by works was made perfect.' Abraham's faith in the promise, in the promise of a son, by which he was justified before God, Rom. iv. 3. justified itself before men, by the performance, thirty years after, ver. 21. when being strong in faith, he gave glory to God, by offering his son upon the altar; and Rahab the harlot's faith in the God of Israel, by which she became an object of the divine regard, 'proved itself sincere,' when afterwards in

circumstances of difficulty and danger, 'she received the messengers' who came to examine Jericho, and in order to save them from their pursuers, 'sent them out another way.' The question proposed, ver. 15. when thus explained, at once loses its difficulty. 'What doth it profit, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith, can such a faith, 'save him?' And this is the answer to it, ver. 26. 'As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.'

Let us be reminded, by the whole argument, how vital a feature of true Christianity is 'love to the brethren,' love to them especially as brethren; and because they are so, because they bear the image of Christ, because though 'the world knows them not,' they are known and loved by God. Let us remember also that there is only one source from which this love can emanate, even from the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory; the faith of his love to us, in becoming poor, that we might be rich; in emptying himself of his glory, that we might become partakers of it. 'Walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us, as offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.'

PRAYER.

Everlasting and omniscient God, unto thee would we lift up our souls, and in his name, with whom thou art ever well-pleased, we would supplicate thy favour. Solemnize our minds by the recollection that thou, who knowest the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that shall be, art also the searcher of all hearts, the ever-present witness, the infallible judge. Thou art greater than our hearts, and thou knowest all things. And thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel, so holy that thou canst not look upon sin, so holy that no sinner can stand in thy presence. Our God is a consuming fire. Yet to whom can we flee for succour, under the consciousness of guilt, or the dread of vengeance, but only to thee, O God? Blessed be thy name, that we are permitted to address thee as our God, our God in covenant, our God in Christ, who art reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing unto men their trespasses, who art as gracious to forgive as thou art holy to hate and just to punish, who art just even in justifying the ungodly who believe in Jesus, at once the sinner's friend and sin's eternal foe. And we rejoice to believe, that thine is an omniscient mercy; that though the number of our sins be incalculable, save only by thyself, thou art willing, for Christ's sake, abundantly to pardon them all; that in him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of thy grace, wherein thou hast abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. O do thou grant us the blessed

consciousness that this redemption is ours, that Christ himself is ours, and we are his. Increase our faith in the Lord Jesus; increase it in its simplicity, in its vitality, in its comforting and quickening energy. May we know whom we have believed; may we count all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, whom having not seen, may we love, and believing in him may we rejoice, even with a joy unspeakable, and full of glory. And do thou impart to us, in larger and yet larger measure, the influence of thy free Spirit to renew and sanctify us. Cleanse the sanctuary of our hearts, dethrone every idol, take full possession for thyself; may the Lord alone be exalted. Thou knowest our individual necessities, be pleased to supply them; may each of us receive grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, and may that grace be sufficient for us. Dwell in this family, and as thou hast been our fathers' God, the God of Bethel, do thou vouchsafe to us also thy choicest blessing. As for us, and our house, we will serve the Lord. May each of us be a living member of thine own holy and happy family; let none of us be wanting in that day when thou makest up thy jewels. Be gracious to our friends, forgive our enemies, reward our benefactors; be the husband of the widow, the father of the fatherless, the helper of those who have no help in men. Prosper thine own cause, gather in thine elect, and hasten thy kingdom. Let thy way be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the King reign and prosper; and from the uttermost corners of the earth may there be heard songs, even glory to the righteous One. We implore thy protection and guidance during this day. May the Lord preserve us from all evil, may the Lord preserve our souls. Henceforth, in going out and in, do thou keep us for ever. And all we now ask is for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIV. 8.

SCRIPTURE—JAMES III.

REMARKS.

'What man is he that loveth life, and desireth to see good days? let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking guile.' Thus speaks the psalmist, and his words derive an impressive illustration from the picture here presented to us, of the destructiveness of the tongue. Though 'a little member,' it worketh mightily; mightily for good,

if wisely used, but mightily for ill, if left unbridled and untamed. It is like the 'bit' in the horse's mouth, which turns about his whole body; it is like the helm of a vessel, which instantly obeys the master's will, and which, even in a tempest, the vessel obeys; it is like a spark of fire, which though itself harmless, may kindle a conflagration. Most of the wars which desolate the earth, most of the tumults which rend society, and many of the jealousies and discords by which the peace of families is disturbed, by which happiness and health, and even life are sacrificed, arise from rash, false, or malicious speaking. 'The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison,' even 'the poison of asps,' 'it setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell.'

How valuable an attainment, then, the government of the tongue, the government of those passions which speak by the tongue. This may truly be called 'the elixir of life,' more effectual by far, both to sweeten life and to lengthen it, than all the medicines in the world.

But who can tame the tongue, and make it the minister of health and peace? 'The tongue can no man tame;' though the experiment has often been tried, it has never yet succeeded. Every other monster, whether of air, earth, or sea, has been tamed, and made tractable, but this; it is 'deceitful above all things, and incurably wicked, who can know it?' But 'that which is impossible with men, is possible with God.' He alone can achieve the deed, for 'behold,' saith he, 'I make all things new.' And this blessing, as well as every other, comes to us from Christ, out of the 'fullness of grace' which was 'poured into his lips,' and which he imparts to ours. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' The soul of a man who has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, regains in a measure its power of self-control; can enchain the malignant passions, making them captive under the dominion of holy love, and pour a balun of honeyed words unto the wounds of his own or his neighbour's miseries. Would we then obtain this divine cure? We must seek it of that heavenly Physician who 'healeth all our diseases,' and 'who satisfieth our mouth with good things;' and if we would preserve it, in its native freshness and efficacy, we must guard against every deleterious admixture, and sedulously watch its daily application. If we would have our speech to be 'with grace,' we must 'keep our hearts,' and keep them 'with all diligence, since out of them are the issues of life.' The fountain must be pure, that the stream may be pure also, and that the stream may be uniform, not 'sending forth from the same fountain sweet water and bitter,' ver. 11., a thing, indeed, impossible in nature, but exemplified by that unnatural, 'unruly evil,' the tongue, when 'out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing.' How much do we stand in need of the pure and perfect 'wisdom that is from above,' ver. 17. Let us highly value it, especially as contrasted with that which is 'earthly, sensual, devilish;' let us diligently 'seek for it as for hid treasure,' and 'if we lack wisdom, let us ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given us.'

PRAYER.

O God, our heavenly Father, do thou inspire us with the grace of true humility, especially when, as now, we present ourselves before thy holy Majesty, and take thy name into our mouths. Give us to feel, as did thy servant of old, when, beholding the vision of thy glory, he exclaimed, Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Behold, we are vile, and what shall we answer thee? We have destroyed ourselves, O God, but in thee is our help. And there is hope in Israel concerning this thing, for there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Though the tongue can no man tame, yet thou canst, and thou hast often done it, and thou hast promised to do it again; with thee is the residue of the Spirit; from thee cometh down the wisdom that is pure, peaceable, and gentle, and it hath pleased thee, the Father, that in Christ Jesus, thy dear Son, all fullness of grace and blessing should dwell. O then, do thou grant us a living faith in Jesus, and a vital union to him, that so our guilt and pollution may be cleansed at once, that being joined to the Lord, we may be of one spirit with him, that Christ may be formed in us the hope of glory, and that, animated by a continual and constraining sense of his love, we may grow in conformity to his example, who did no sin, and in whose mouth no guile was found, who was meek and lowly in heart, on whose tongue was the law of kindness and love. Forgive, we beseech thee, wherein this day, we have offended, or come short. Alas! wert thou to enter into judgment with us, even for the sins of a day, we could not stand, nor answer thee for one of a thousand; even the thought of foolishness is sin before thee. But how precious the assurance, that the blood of Christ thy Son cleanseth from all sin, and that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. May every day's experience serve to shut us up more entirely to the faith of this blessed truth, that so the love of Christ filling our hearts, our mouths may be eloquent with his praise, and our lives devoted to his service. Be the God of this family; may each member of our household belong to the household of faith; may each heart be a temple for thee to dwell in. And may those of our dear friends, who are absent from us, be fellow-partakers with us of thy grace. Bless all thy chosen people every where; feed, and lead, and lift up. Heal their divisions, bring to a per-

petual end their envyings one of another, and let the blessed period soon arrive, when the shepherds shall see eye to eye, and when all that now distracts and weakens thy holy church universal shall be buried and forgotten in the love of one another. Bless our own land, and our own church, and this portion of thy vineyard in which thou hast cast our lot. May thy work flourish among us; may it revive and prosper, as in the days of old. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, and make thy countenance to shine, and so we shall be safe. To thy care and keeping we commend ourselves during the ensuing night, giving thee thanks also for the mercies of the day which is now drawing to a close. We will lay ourselves down in peace, and take quiet rest, because thou, Lord, our Father who art in heaven, makest us to dwell in safety. Hear our supplications, forgive, answer, and accept of us, for Jesus our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXII. 5.

SCRIPTURE—DANIEL IX.

REMARKS.

Understanding from the writings of Jeremiah, that the time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, was close at hand, Daniel set himself to seek from God by prayer and fasting the fulfilment of the mercy promised to his people. The supplication which he offered up in their behalf extends from the 3d to the 20th verse; and the answer which he received from the 20th verse to the end of the chapter.

His prayer breathes a spirit of profound humility, meekness, faith, earnestness, and zeal for the glory of God. Believing the fervent prayer to be the effectual prayer, he manifested the same spirit that Jacob did when he said to the angel of the covenant, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.' O let us, like him, go to the throne, and continue there, asking until we receive, seeking until we find. Let us, too, like him, go thither with a statement of the wants of others as well as of our own, remembering that by acting the part of intercessors, we may be the means of imparting many a blessing, and of removing or sanctifying many a woe.

Never did the hearer of prayer say to any of the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. 'While Daniel was speaking, and praying, and confessing his sins,' the angel Gabriel, under a human form, appeared to him about three in the afternoon, the time of the evening oblation. Important was the message with which this heavenly visitant was entrusted. It related to him to whom the Jews under all their sorrows were directed to look for consolation; and it made known the time, the design, and the consequences of his advent. An edict was about

to be issued for the rebuilding of the holy city, which then lay desolate; and within seventy weeks, or 490 prophetic days, in other words, 490 common years thereafter, the dispensation of Moses was to be finally, and for ever superseded by the dispensation of the Messiah. Now in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes, Ezra received a commission to 'beautify the house of the Lord which was at Jerusalem;' in seven weeks, or forty-nine years, a 'troublesome' season, the work was completed under Nehemiah; six-two weeks, or 434 years elapsed from that date ere the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, announcing the kingdom of heaven to be at hand; and in the midst of the last week, or towards the close of the last seven years, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the one offering of himself upon the cross, fulfilled Old Testament predictions, caused the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. It is impossible to mistake the calamitous events to which the latter portion of both the 26th and the 27th verses refers. During the course of his public ministry, our Saviour frequently adverted to them; never perhaps with more pathos than just before he made his last public entrance into Jerusalem. On that occasion, when, as he passed over the brow of the mount of Olives, he saw the city spread out in all its magnificence before him; he wept over it and said, 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee.' These words may be regarded as an exposition of the closing communication which was made to Daniel; and every reader of history knows with what unerring accuracy the prediction was verified. Before the 'seventy weeks' had passed away, Jerusalem had become a heap, and the mountain of God's house like high places of the forest. God forbid that any of us should fall upon the same example of unbelief. The disasters by which the Jews were overtaken 'happened unto them for our admonition; and the awful warning which they give, is briefly but significantly embodied in the words, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation.'

PRAYER.

Thou, O Lord, art our God, and we will praise thee. Thou wast our fathers' God, and we will exalt thee. But above all, thou art the God and the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and anew would we thank thee for thine unspeakable gift. We adore thee that thou hast laid our help upon One mighty and able to save. Glory be to the Father, who when there was no eye to pity, and no arm to work deliverance, was pleased, in the fullness of his compassion, to provide the Lamb without blemish and without spot, for a burnt-offering! Glory

be to the Son, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame! Glory be to the Holy Ghost, the Comforter and the Sanctifier of the church, who applieth to the souls of thy people the blessings of the Saviour's purchase! O forbid that any of us, like the unbelieving Jews of old, should do despite to redeeming love. May we be washed, justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. O give us thy good Spirit, to teach us what thou wouldest have us to do, to make us what thou wouldest have us to be, to lead us into all the truth, to adorn us with all the graces of the Christian life, to crown our faith with the peaceable and the enduring fruits of righteousness. By nature we are dead in trespasses, may thy Spirit revive and quicken us. By nature we are far from thee; may thy Spirit bring us near, and make us one by faith with thy dear Son. By nature we are averse to thy holy law; may thy Spirit slay this enmity; enlarging and purifying our hearts, may he lead us to run with delight in the path of all thy commandments. And may thy Spirit seal us unto the day of complete and everlasting redemption, enabling us to persevere in well-doing to the end, preserving us faithful unto death. We bless thee that by the recorded example of thy people, as well as by the precepts and the promises of thy word, thou hast invited and encouraged us to pray for others as well as for ourselves. We rejoice to think that in our Father's house there is bread enough, and to spare. Giving does not impoverish thee, withholding does not enrich thee. Be pleased then to listen to our prayers in behalf of the church of Christ, the church universal on earth; our hearts desire is that thou wouldest heal her divisions, that thou wouldest remove her corruptions, and that thou wouldest extend her boundaries. Build up the waste places of Zion, satisfy her poor with bread, clothe her priests with salvation, cause her saints to shout for joy. Revive thy work in the midst of our own country, of our own neighbourhood, of our own family. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. We bless thee for the comfort of the past night, and for the circumstances of tranquillity and comfort in which thou hast permitted us to assemble together around thine altar. Be with us, and with all who are near and dear to us, throughout this day. And whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, may we do all to thy glory, may we do all in the name of Jesus, may we do all in dependence upon thy blessing, may we do all as with a view

to the account which we must give in at a judgment-seat. Hear these our prayers. We present them in the name of him whom thou lovest and hearest always. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XC. 11.

SCRIPTURE—JAMES IV.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—6. At the beginning of this chapter it appears to be the design of the apostle to guard Christians against the sins with which the Jews of the day were chargeable. It may be supposed to be to the latter that he more especially addresses himself, when he declares that the disputes in which they indulged had their origin neither in patriotism nor in piety, but in covetousness, contention, and revenge. These unsanctified passions, after giving battle to and triumphing over the dictates of reason, and of conscience, proceed, according to his expressive metaphor, to wage war against the peace and well-being of society, unscrupulously assailing whatever stands in the way of their gratification. But it is their fate to be disappointed. The worldlyminded men who give way to them seek after happiness, but seek after it in vain. Ignorant of the elements of which happiness is composed, and of the quarter in which happiness is to be found, they either pray not at all, or pray only for gifts which perish in the using. Well may they who thus make temporal possessions and temporal pleasures the objects of their idolatry, be signalized as adulterers and adulteresses, despisers of him to whom they are professedly espoused, and well may they be reminded that the disposition to mind earthly things which characterizes them is neither more nor less than enmity against God. God is not loved at all unless he be loved predominantly; and above all, if he reign in the heart, his throne must be undivided, he must reign without a rival. Altogether opposed to the temper which distinguishes his children is the tendency which is evinced by those who are of the earth, earthy. Theirs is 'a spirit which lusteth to envy,' a corrupt principle which leads them to regard prosperity, and the various indulgences which prosperity can command as their chief good, and which produces as its natural fruits, strife, fraud, malice, and injustice. To the dominion of such vile affections God will not leave any of those who are his. The good work which he begins within their hearts, he will carry on, mature, and perfect; and while he 'resisteth the proud,' while he sets himself, as it were, in battle-array against the self-witted, and the highminded, 'he giveth grace to the humble,' to all who feel their need of that precious blessing, and pray in sincerity for its bestowal.

Ver. 7—10. From these considerations is deduced the obligation which lies upon all to make a surrender of themselves unto God. If they would be his,

they must submit with meekness and docility to the guidance of his word, to the direction of his Spirit, and to the conduct of his providence. If they would be his, too, they must resist his enemy and their own, the prince who ruleth over the children of disobedience; opposing to his fiery darts the shield of faith, and saying in reply to his every temptation, 'shall I do this great evil and sin against God.' At the same time that they may be strengthened for the conflict, and be replenished with every necessary grace, they are enjoined to go to the mercy-seat of God in Christ, and to go thither humbly, yet confidently, mourning over their demerit, but not despairing of forgiveness. Such is the sorrow which is assured of consolation, such the abatement that terminates in glory.

Ver. 11, 12. Next follow certain dissuatives against the sin of rash judgment and detraction.

Ver. 13—17. The folly of boasting of to-morrow is the subject with which the chapter concludes. Such conduct is less excusable by far in one who enjoys the light of revelation, than in a benighted heathen. 'To him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not,' to him who is aware that in all things he ought to acknowledge God, and who in the ordinary affairs of life makes no such acknowledgment, 'to him it is sin,' the greater and the more aggravated sin.

PRAYER.

Thou, O Lord, art great, and greatly to be praised; thou art holy, and therefore to be had in profoundest reverence; thou art good to all, and supremely to be adored, both on earth below and in heaven above. Bless the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O our souls. Towards us how manifold and how wonderful have been the expressions of thy favour! Thou madest us at first, not we ourselves; and we gratefully acknowledge that it is only because thou hast never left nor forsaken us that we have been so long preserved in the land of the living, and the place of hope. Graciously hast thou dealt with us in every stage of our existence. Liberally hast thou supplied our returning wants. Thou hast guided us through many difficulties, thou hast protected us from many dangers, thou hast disappointed many of our fears, thou hast exceeded many of our hopes, thou hast been a very present help in our time of trouble. Herein especially, and above all, was love, not that we loved thee, but that thou lovedst us, and didst send thy Son into our world to impart unto thy people pardon of sin, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, purity of heart and life, and the hope of glory. It is only in his name that we are emboldened

to come into thy presence, and to bow before thy throne. We believe in him, help thou our unbelief; rebuke every suspicion of his faithfulness and supremacy away from us. Give us grace to confide in his love, to lay hold of his righteousness, and to surrender ourselves to his disposal. May he be formed in us our sole hope of glory. May he be made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Thus reconciled to thee through the blood of his cross, may we be enabled to live as becometh the children of thine adoption, hating that which thou hatest, and following after that in which thou takest pleasure. And do thou who hast all hearts in thy hands, and who turnest them as the rivers of water whithersoever thou pleasest, so dispose our hearts, by the grace of thy Spirit, as that sin may become our aversion, and the paths of holiness may be regarded by us as paths of pleasantness and peace. Living in the world, and discharging the duties which we owe to the world, but renouncing its spirit, and keeping aloof from its defilements, may we be enabled to show that our home is on the other side of death, that our treasure is within the veil. O amidst all the trials and turmoils of time, may this glorious hope, the hope of immortality, be as the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. May it fortify against temptation, quicken to the discharge of duty, minister comfort under sorrow, and counteract the fear of death. Be very gracious to all who are connected with us by whatever tie. The Lord bless them, the Lord cause the light of his countenance to shine upon them, and give them peace. Be very favourable to us as a family. May goodness and mercy follow us; may the everlasting arms be ever underneath and around us; and may we at length appear before thee, no wanderer lost, a family in heaven. These our prayers we present in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, thine eternal Son, and our adorable Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX.

SCRIPTURE—DANIEL X.

REMARKS.

In the seventy-third year of his captivity, and in the ninetieth of his age, Daniel was honoured with another vision, the details of which occupy the whole of the chapter which is before us, and of the other two chapters which succeed. Before receiving this mark of favour, he had spent three weeks in humiliation before God, mourning over the want of patriot-

ism manifested by some of his countrymen, who chose to remain in the land of their bondage, and over the difficulties experienced in the rebuilding of the temple by others of them who, taking advantage of the proclamation of Cyrus, had returned to Jerusalem. The vision took place in the neighbourhood of Shushan, the palace, in which the prophet is supposed to have been at that time residing. Whilst walking on the banks of the Hiddekel, or Tigris, he lifted up his eyes, and beheld one under a human form who, from the description which is given of his appearance, could be none other than the eternal Word, the only begotten of the Father. The linen dress bespeaks the great High Priest of our profession; while the golden girdle which he wore, may be regarded as an emblem at once of his faithfulness and of his power. His countenance, his form, and his speech, were transcendently majestic; and so overwhelming was the effect which they produced upon the prophet, that he felt himself bereft of strength, and fell prostrated upon the ground. Believing him in whose presence the seraphs veil their faces with their wings, he felt as Moses did at mount Sinai, when he said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake.' O how should our hearts burn within us when we think that of this greatness he emptied himself, and over this glory he drew a covering, when he came down from his throne, and became a partaker of flesh and blood!

From the state of amazement into which he had fallen, the prophet was roused by an angel, who, after silencing his fears, and encouraging his hopes, proceeded to make him aware of the design of his coming. During the time which Daniel had spent in prayer, that ministering spirit had been employed at the Persian court in warding off the dangers with which the Jews were threatened; and by the assistance of Michael had been enabled to do so successfully. The enemy from whom these dangers arose was Cambyzes, the son of Cyrus; and he, as a persecutor of the Jews, was to be succeeded by the king of Greece, whilst Michael, their guardian and deliverer, is supposed by some to have been an angelic being of surpassing power and dignity, and by others the great Head of the church himself. The whole passage is full of encouragement to the people of God, and of warning to his adversaries. In seasons of perplexity, in dark and troublous times, what truth is better fitted to minister comfort to believers trembling for their own security or for the prosperity of the cause of Christ, than the assurance that he who sitteth upon his holy hill, disposes of all events as he pleases, and causes the opposition of his foes to rebound to his honour? He has a people on earth against whom no hostility can prevail, and whom no event can separate from his love. They may be overtaken by the hurricane, they may be required to pass through the furnace, persecutors may insult over them for a season, many tribulations may befall them; but they know—and is not the persuasion an animating one?—that under the government of the Prince of peace, nothing evil in itself, or evil in its consequences, will be permitted to come near their dwellings. Do we belong to the happy number? Then are we safe in a rock-built citadel, against

which, because of the strength that is enlisted in its defence, no weapon shall prosper, neither shall the gates of hell be permitted to prevail. 'The kings of the earth may set themselves, and the rulers may take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us. But he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision.' They can do nothing against the truth; their very efforts to overthrow it are overruled for its more triumphant establishment.

PRAYER.

With profound humility, but at the same time, with holy, reverential, child-like confidence, we desire to lift up hearts unto thee, O Lord, our Father which art in heaven. Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the vail of his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God, we desire to draw near in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Pour down upon us the Spirit of grace and of supplications. We adore thee for the freedom of access which we have to thy mercy-seat. We adore thee that, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, we are commanded to make known our requests unto thee. We adore thee for the assurance that we have a gracious and all-prevalent Intercessor at thy right hand, one who is able to save to the uttermost all who come to thee through him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession in their behalf. We appear before thee in his name, beseeching thee that thou, for his sake, wouldst open up the treasures of thy grace, and impart to each of us the blessings of which thou knowest us to stand in need. We stand, all of us, in need of justifying mercy; we have all of us reason to say, God be merciful to us sinners. Which of thy commandments have we not broken, which of thy precepts have we not despised? But be pleased, for thine own name's sake, to lift upon us the light of thy countenance, and to cause us to experience the blessedness of those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose persons are accepted, whose peace is made. We stand, also, all of us, in need of purifying and strengthening grace; for our hearts are deceitful, our wills are perverse, and in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. Therefore it is that we beseech thee to create the clean heart, and to renew the right spirit within us. Take away the hard and stony hearts, and give us hearts of flesh, hearts softened by thy grace, moulded to thy will, devoted to thy service. Enable us to glorify thee on earth; and deliver

us from the evil with which the world abounds. Save us from the great adversary of souls, save us from the contagion of ungodly example, save us from the fear of man that bringeth a snare, save us from the deceitfulness of our own corrupt nature. Fit us for whatever thou hast in store for us, and forbid that the summons of death should find any of us unprepared. Draw near to the sick, to sanctify to them their sufferings; draw near to the dying, to make them ready for their great change. Bless the interests of godliness at home and abroad, and enable us to show our love to Christ by our love to his people, and our desire to promote his cause. Holy Father, into thy hands we commend ourselves, and all in whom we are interested. Do to them, and do to us, beyond what we can ask or think; and the praise shall be thine, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXVI. 9.

SCRIPTURE—JAMES V.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—6. The wealthy Jews, who were the principal enemies of the gospel, are understood to be the individuals to whom the apostle addressed the solemn warnings which are contained in the first six verses of this chapter. The time was at hand when the many sins with which they were chargeable, their avarice, their injustice, their selfishness, their luxuriousness, and above all, their condemnation of the meek and righteous One, were to be overtaken by divine judgments. Let him whose cup runneth over, profit by their experience. The wealth which he possesses will not continue his for ever. It is a trust committed to him only for a season; and grievous will be his doom if, as a miser, he hoard it up for the gratification of selfishness, or if as a sensualist he pervert it into an instrument of sin. Unlike to such a one is the man who is spiritually minded. He keeping his mortality in view, is disposed to take the use of the divine liberality without abusing it; and 'remembering the words of the Lord Jesus how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive,' is enabled to maintain, amid abounding temptation, the character befitting a steward who must soon give in his account.

Ver. 7—11. From rich oppressors the apostle turns to afflicted saints, and after directing language of menace to the former, speaks a few words of encouragement and instruction to the latter. Patience is the grace which he calls upon them to exercise; and with the view of leading them to bear their sorrows without murmuring, and their injuries without revenge, he reminds them that the time of their endurance would be short, the termination glorious.

Ver. 12. One of the effects of impatience under trials is a profane use of the name of God; and against this sin St James entreats believers, above all things, to beware. Their probity ought to be such as, on every occasion when an appeal to the Searcher of hearts as an act of religious worship is uncalled for, to secure credit to their statements, made under the form of simple negatives, or simple affirmations. Alas! by how many who call themselves Christians, is this injunction despised! On the night on which he wished to prove that he was no disciple of Jesus, Peter cursed and swore; and in our own days many imitate his example, as if for the purpose of exonerating themselves from the suspicion of being men who hallow the name and reverence the authority of the most High!

Ver. 13—18. With the view of securing their happiness under the various circumstances in which they may be placed, believers are next enjoined, in their season of distress, to betake themselves to prayer, and in their season of enjoyment to abound in praise. Requests, proceeding from fervent and believing hearts, will not be presented in vain. In compliance with the prayer of faith, God has been pleased to pardon the sins, to subdue the corruptions, to sanctify the sicknesses, to gladden the death-beds of his people in former days. His hand is not shortened now that it cannot save; his ear is not heavy now that it will not listen to the penitential and persevering cry.

Ver. 19, 20. The epistle concludes with a call upon believers to do what in them lies to promote the spiritual well-being of their fellow-men. The conversion of a sinner from the error of his ways is an event with which in point of importance none other will admit of comparison; and as often as it occurs on earth, the voice of melody and congratulation is heard in heaven, the elder branches of the family of God saying to each other, 'This our younger brother was dead but is alive again; he was lost but is found.' O then what wisdom is equal to the wisdom of winning souls; and how unspeakably great is the honour which the Head of the church puts upon him whom he makes the instrument of saving one imperishable spirit from death, and hiding a multitude of sins!

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, adored be thy name, that to the most disobedient of us all the unsearchable riches of Christ are offered without money and without price! O that we may all have grace given to us to close with the merciful proclamation. Hearing the joyful sound, may none of us harden ourselves against it. May we be captivated, may we be overcome by the grace and condescension which appeared in the incarnation, the obedience, the sufferings, and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. May our eyes be brought to see, our minds to understand, our hearts to adore the wonders of his redeeming love. For this cause we bow our knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom

the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. May we esteem him to be precious; may we lean upon him as the beloved of our souls; may we rejoice in him as all our salvation and all our desire. We lament that hitherto we have known so little of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. We mourn over the feebleness of our desires, the coldness of our hearts, the deadness of our affections towards him. We have reason to be full of heaviness when we think how sad a requital we have made for his kindness to usward; how little anxiety we have ever manifested, or ever felt, to adorn his gospel, and to do him honour. But O grant that henceforth we may be enabled to live as becometh those whom he came to redeem from iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Calling ourselves by his name, may we seek to walk in his steps; professing to love him, may we manifest our love by keeping his commandments; calling him our Master and our Lord, may we be enabled to render him a willing obedience. We pray that his kingdom may be established within us, that kingdom which consists of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. We pray that all the kingdoms of this earth may become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. May he take to himself his great power and reign; may he go forth on the morrow in the chariots of the gospel, conquering and to conquer. We bless thee for the weekly return of the Christian sabbath; we hail the near approach of the day of rest. Grant that to many it may be the date of their conversion; that to many it may be a stage on their path of progressive holiness; that to many it may be a foretaste and a pledge of that sinless and endless sabbath which remains for thy people in the sanctuary above. At the close of another week, we bless thee for the many mercies which during the course of it we have enjoyed; and we commend ourselves anew to thee at its close. If spared to see the dawn, O may we be in the Spirit on the Lord's day; may it prove a season of much refreshing to our souls. Our prayers are before thee, be pleased to send us the answer of peace, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXVI.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CXXVI. CXXVII. CXXVIII.

REMARKS.

PSALM CXXVI. This psalm is supposed to have been written by Ezra, or some other pious writer, in commemoration of the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon. It breathes a spirit of the most devout and lively gratitude to God for the deliverance he had wrought for them.

Ver. 1—3. The Lord is here explicitly recognized as the sole cause and author of his people's return. The penman of the psalm, writing in the name of the church, does not say that they had themselves effected their return, or that Cyrus, king of Persia, had restored them; but that 'The Lord had turned again their captivity;' and that not to themselves, or to Cyrus, but to the Lord, was to be ascribed the glory of their return. This return seems to have filled them with strange emotions. 'When the Lord turned again their captivity, they were like men that dream.' The thing was at once so desirable, and so unlooked for, that they knew not how they could believe it to be true. They were to remember that it was the Lord that 'stirred up Cyrus' spirit' so to favour them, and that to the Lord their thanksgivings were due.

Ver. 4—6. While the Lord had done much for them which called for their praise, there was yet much he had to do for them. Hence they prayed, 'Turn again our captivity as streams of the south.' Many of their brethren were yet left behind, whose return they could not but most ardently desire. The Samaritans, and Ammonites, and other enemies, opposed the efforts of such as had returned to repair their breaches. Among themselves, too, there were many unsound and hypocritical professors, more concerned about their own worldly good than about the interests of Zion. But the pious took encouragement from what God had already done for them, so far beyond their expectations or deserts, to pray that he would glorify his power and mercy in perfecting what concerned them; that his farther gracious interposition in redressing their grievances might be refreshing to them, 'like streams of water' to the thirsty scorched soil. The psalm concludes with language which may be regarded as at once expressive of gratitude for what God had enabled the restored captives to experience, and of encouragement to others who might be called to encounter difficulties and sorrows.

PSALM CXXVII. This psalm is entitled a song of degrees for Solomon, written probably by his father David, to impress deeply upon his mind a sense of his entire and absolute dependence upon God.

Ver. 1, 2. Solomon had to build a house of unparalleled magnificence, a 'palace not for man, but for the Lord God.' Solomon, with all his surpassing wisdom, could not have erected this house without the Lord's special guidance and Almighty aid; nor

without these could Solomon, with all his skill and influence, have built up and protected the Jewish state. The superior wisdom and experience of Ahithophel, though tendered to Absalom, was not allowed to avail him, because he sought without God, yea, in opposition to the will of God, to erect for himself the Jewish state. 'Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.' How mad in rulers to attempt to preserve the peace and order of society without God! How perverse and pernicious the doctrine of those who would counsel them that it is not their duty to have religion taught to those whom, as the ministers of God, they are appointed to govern!

PSALM CXXVIII. God is to be feared by the children of men. This is implied in the relation that subsists between God their Creator and them, as his dependent rational creatures. The very idea of God and rational creatures, as the workmanship of his hand, implies that he is to be feared by them. God is infinitely worthy to be feared. He possesses every quality and attribute calculated to secure their fear and homage. To fear him implies a knowledge of his character, as revealed in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. It implies reconciliation to him through the death of his Son; a trembling at his threatenings; a standing in awe of his judgments; a submission to his chastisements; an acting upon the principle that he must be obeyed rather than men. It is a sanctifying him in the heart, and making him habitually the fear and the dread. He that feareth God 'walketh in the way of the Lord.' He makes conscience of attending to all his will, and that from those principles to which alone the Lord can have respect. Now, the man who thus fears the Lord is a blessed man. He need have no other fear. Sanctifying him in his heart, he will be a sanctuary to him to preserve him from the evils, enemies, dangers, and fears, to which he is exposed. 'He shall eat of the labour of his hands.' Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is. There is no want to them that fear God. Surely it shall be well with them in this life, and in that which is to come. If for their good, they shall be blessed with children, who, by God's blessing, shall be a comfort and honour to them. 'They shall see, if they duly seek, the good of Jerusalem, and peace on Israel,' which they cannot but desire above their chief joy.

PRAYER.

Thou, even thou alone, O Lord, art he that should be feared; and who may stand before thee if once thou be angry? Who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy? Thy hand is for good upon all them that seek thee; but thy power and thy wrath are against all them that forsake thee. The Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake, because it hath pleased the Lord to make them his people. The mountains may depart, and the earth be removed, but thy loving-kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of thy peace be removed.

saith the Lord, that hath mercy upon thee. Do not thine eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show thyself strong in behalf of him whose heart is perfect towards thee. Let us sanctify thee in our hearts, and make thee our fear and our dread, that thou mayest be for a sanctuary to us, to preserve us from the evils and dangers to which we are exposed. Let us not fear men, who can merely kill our body, but afterwards have no more that they can do; but may we fear thee, who, after thou hast killed our body, hast power to cast both soul and body into hell. Let not our heart envy sinners; but let us be in the fear of the Lord all the day long, for surely there shall be an end both of the triumphing of the wicked, and of the sorrows and sufferings of thy people, and the expectation of those who fear thee shall not be cut off. We thank thee, Lord, for our sabbath liberty, and our sabbath opportunities. May we enter into the spirit of this day's service. May we call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable, and honour thee upon it by not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words. May we have such a relish for the holy exercises of the sabbath as shall be a satisfactory evidence that we shall spend an eternal sabbath in thy blissful presence. Let those who profane thy sabbaths consider their guilt and folly ere it be too late, lest the time come when they shall intensely desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but shall not be so favoured. Go forth this day with the preaching of thy Son's gospel. May it have free course and be glorified. Pour out thy Spirit this day as rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth. Make the places round about thy hill a blessing. Cause the rain to come down in his season. Let there be showers of blessings. When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, do thou, the Lord, hear, do thou, the God of Israel, not forsake them. Revive thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make known, in wrath remember mercy. Prepare us for rendering thee that public homage which is so justly due unto thee. And to thy name, in Christ, be glory and praise, now and for ever. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXX.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CXXIX. CXXX. CXXXI.

REMARKS.

PSALM CXXIX. This psalm has a reference not to the case of any individual, but to the concerns of the church in her public capacity, and was probably written when she was in trouble.

Ver. 1—4. On the present occasion the church called to her remembrance, and rehearsed in the ears of the Lord, the manifold trials in which she had been involved, with his seasonable interpositions in her favour, whereby he had restrained her enemies from 'prevailing against her.' From her youth, or institution, the church of God has been persecuted and afflicted by the ungodly and the profane. From the beginning the seed of the serpent have displayed hatred, malice, and cruelty, towards the seed of the woman. More especially from the period of the church's sojourn in Egypt, which is elsewhere represented as 'the time of her youth,' was she afflicted and oppressed by enemies. In Egypt her members were made to groan by reason of taskmasters, while her children were cruelly destroyed. But from her bondage and affliction in Egypt the Lord delivered her with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and instituted the passover, to be annually observed in the church, partly in commemoration of that mighty deliverance. Often was the church oppressed and afflicted by enemies in the land of Canaan. It is true it was the backsliding of the church that provoked the Lord to allow enemies to assail and injure her. Yet when she saw and confessed the evil of her sin, and cried unto the Lord out of her affliction, he restrained enemies, and rescued his church out of their hands. Many instances of this kind are recorded in the book of Judges. In this psalm the church is to be viewed as gratefully acknowledging such deliverances, as an argument to induce God to rescue her from the trouble and oppression to which she was at that time involved. She acknowledges, to God's honour, that though 'the plowers had plowed her back, making long their furrows, God had cut asunder their cords,' thereby putting an end to such injurious treatment. Some suppose the captives in Babylon to have been subjected to scourging, to which there may here be an illusion. 'The Lord is righteous who hath cut asunder their cords,' righteous in afflicting us, and faithful and merciful in hearing our cry in our time of need; righteous in confounding and punishing our relentless enemies, by whom we were so unjustly and cruelly oppressed.

Ver. 5—8. Those who love Christ, the King of Zion, cannot but desire that 'the haters of Zion,' who hate her King without a cause, may 'be confounded and turned back,' and prevented from performing their enterprise of accomplishing her injury and ruin. The language here employed, in the form of a wish or prayer, on the part of the church, may be regarded as a prediction, on the part of the Spirit of God, that the haters of Zion may be 'like grass on the house tops, which withereth before it groweth up,' which entirely disappoints the labours

of the mower, to whom, while engaged in reaping it, it would be mockery to address the pious salutation usually presented to reapers while engaged in the work of the harvest. Most suitable is the exercise of the church, unfolded in this psalm, to the state and circumstances of the church in this land, in her present perilous condition. Were she duly to enter into the spirit of the exercise here described, the Lord would without fail accomplish her enlargement.

PSALM CXXX. This psalm has a reference to the psalmist's individual case, and seems to have been written when he was in great distress.

PSALM CXXXI. This psalm is supposed to have been written by David, to vindicate himself from certain false charges.

Ver. 1, 2. By Saul and his adherents David was charged with intolerable pride and boundless ambition in seeking for himself the crown and kingdom of Israel. The psalmist indignantly repelled such charges, appealing confidently to the Searcher of hearts, that he aimed at nothing to which he had not called him to aspire; and that, however he had been provoked by Saul's malice and cruelty, and solicited by his followers to avenge himself and better his condition, he had restrained himself, as devoid of the ambition with which he had been charged, and as dependent upon the providence of God to bring him to the throne, as the weaned infant who takes no care to provide for itself, but depends upon its mother for the supply of its wants. The believer, when assailed with charges injurious to his character, and derogatory to the honour of the religion which he professes, is fully warranted, with David, and Samuel, and Paul, and others, to vindicate himself.

PRAYER.

Who, O Lord, is a God like unto thee, who pardonest the iniquity, and passest by the transgression of the remnant of thy heritage, because thou delightest in mercy? There is forgiveness with thee, because there is a propitiation with thee that thou mayest be feared. If the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thought, and return unto thee in the way thou hast appointed, thou wilt have mercy upon him, thou wilt abundantly pardon his sins. Thou graciously proclaimest, I was, I am he that blot-eth out thine iniquity for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. We bless thee that in Christ thou art reconciling a guilty world unto thyself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and that thou hast sent to us, in this distant island of the Gentiles, the word of reconciliation. We adore thee for the gift and sacrifice of him on whom thou hast laid our help. In this was manifested thy love to us, because that thou gavest thine only begotten Son that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that

God loved us, and gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. We bless thee for the perfection of that sacrifice which he presented to thee when he offered up himself. It was impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sin. It was necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified by these; but the heavenly things themselves by better sacrifices than these. The legal sacrifices, though in themselves worthless, might, by thine appointment, make a typical atonement; but it was only the sacrifice of Emmanuel that could make a real atonement for sin. It was only by setting forth thy Son, as a propitiation through faith in his blood, that thou couldst be seen to be just, and holy, and true, in justifying the ungodly. We thank thee that through Christ there is preached to us the forgiveness of sins, and that by him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. May we be justified by his blood, and saved from wrath through him. As he has reigned in us unto death, so may grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. And may his grace, bringing us salvation, teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in the present world, thereby looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. For all that we ask or hope for is in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXXIII. 8—12.

SCRIPTURE—DANIEL XL.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—4. The three kings that arose after Cyrus, the monarch reigning at the time of this vision, were Cambyses, or the Ahasuerus of scripture, Smerdis, or Artaxerxes, and Darius Hystaspes. The fourth, who was to be far richer than these, was Xerxes, who invaded Greece with an immense army, which was there completely overthrown and destroyed. The mighty king who was to stand up, and do according to his will, was Alexander the Great, who invaded and subdued the Persian empire. After his death, four of his generals took possession of his dominions. But two only of these, with their respective successors, are referred to in the sequel of this chapter, the one of which lying north, and the other south of Judea, are styled 'the king of the north,' and 'the king of the south,' that is, the kings of Syria and Egypt.

Ver. 5—9. Ptolemy Lagus the first king of Egypt after Alexander, was rich and powerful, yet Seleucus the conqueror, king of Syria, was, in all respects, greater than he. After their death, their sons, another Ptolemy, and Antiochus, entered into alliance by marriage, Antiochus divorcing his wife, Laodice, and marrying Berenice, Ptolemy's daughter, with whom he received an immense dowry. But this wealth, here called 'the power of the army,' did not secure her or her partner; for Antiochus recalled Laodice, by whom he was poisoned, and Berenice and her son murdered, with all who adhered to her cause. But the brother of Berenice, Ptolemy Euergetus, came with a mighty army, and avenged her death, taking many cities and much spoil from the king of the north; and presenting to the God of Israel, at Jerusalem, sacrifices in acknowledgment of his victory. After various engagements between the successors of these monarchs, we are introduced to one who is notable as a persecutor of the church of God.

Ver. 21—29. This Antiochus, surnamed in profane history, 'Epiphanes,' or the illustrious, here designated 'a vile, or contemptible person.' He usurped the throne of Syria, which belonged to his nephew, whom he had contrived to send as a hostage to Rome, in his own stead; and was through life notorious for craft, flattery, and deceit. By these means, he frustrated the attempt of Ptolemy to support Heliodorus, minister of his late brother. Seleucus killed Onias the high-priest, ravaged and plundered, in two successive campaigns, the richest provinces of Egypt, having bribed the generals of Ptolemy to betray their sovereign. Undertaking a third campaign into that country, he was resisted and driven back with shame; 'the ships of Chittim,' or of the Romans, going forth against him. Mortified and indignant at his defeat, he returned and vented his rage against Jerusalem, which he laid waste, and set on fire. In the latter part of the chapter, there is a transition from Antiochus to the Romans, or at all events, Antiochus is there described as the type, while the Roman power, and especially the Roman apostacy, is the antitype, of the most inveterate hostility to the church of the living God.

Ver. 31—35. Both Antiochus and the Roman power corrupted the unsound professors of the true religion by flatterers, while the people who knew their God did exploits; the Maccabees, in the time of Antiochus; the first Christians in the time of pagan Rome, the Waldenses, and Albigenses, and others, in the time of papal Rome. While the description, 'They that understand shall instruct many,' followed by the intimation, 'yet shall they fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days,' may have a primary reference to the instruction and sufferings of the Maccabees, it cannot be doubted but there is an ultimate reference to the instruction and sufferings under pagan and papal Rome. The sufferings of the Maccabees, under Antiochus, were short; those of the Christians, as here intimated, of long continuance. The 'little help' wherewith those who should fall should be holpen, may refer primarily to the aid afforded to the Jews by Matthias and Judas Maccabeus, but

ultimately to that vouchsafed to the Christians by the emperor Constantine.

Ver. 36—39. The description contained in these verses is chiefly applicable to papal Rome, as may be seen by comparing them with 2 Thess. ii 4; Rev. xiii. xvii. Of this power it is said that he shall not regard the God of his fathers, the true God, whose worship is supposed to have been antecedently introduced by his fathers, but shall in his stead honour the 'God of forces,' or *Mahuzzim*, that is, saints, angels, and images, as the patrons, guardians, and protectors of mankind. 'Neither shall he regard the desire of women.' Pagan Rome discouraged marriage, and papal Rome more so, till monks and nuns greatly multiplied, and marriage was at last forbidden to the clergy. The Romish bishops, priests, and monks, are the champions and defenders of *Mahuzzim*, in the sense now explained; and they were 'increased with honour, ruled over many, and divided the land for gain.' The remaining parts of the prophecy are not so applicable to Antiochus as to Rome.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou knowest the end from the beginning. Thy counsel shall stand, and thou wilt do all thy pleasure. Thou art of one mind, and who shall turn thee. Thou art not a man that thou shouldst lie, nor the son of man that thou shouldst repent! Hast thou said it, and wilt thou not do it; or hast thou spoken it, and wilt thou not make it good? Thy mighty hand can easily accomplish whatever thy mind and counsel determine before should be done. There is no difficulty or restraint laid upon thee. Who hath resisted thy will? Who would set the briars and the thorns before thee in battle? Wouldest thou not go through them, and burn them up together? Thou, even thou alone, art he that should be feared, and who may stand before thee if once thou be angry? Thou makest the wrath of man to praise thee, and the remainder of his wrath thou dost restrain. What man meaneth for evil, thou often meanest for good, to bring to pass the purposes of thy grace to those who love thee, and are the called according to thy purpose. We bless thee for the special care thou exercisest over thy church. We adore thee for the promises of protection and favour which thou hast afforded her. We thank thee for thy counsel to walk about Zion, and go round about her, to tell the towers thereof, to mark well her bulwarks, to consider her palaces, that we may tell it to the generation following, and may say, This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guardian unto death. Bless thy church universal. May she lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes. Hasten the latter day glory. Overrule all the events that

are taking place for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. May the time soon arrive when voices shall be heard in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. May we belong to Christ's kingdom. May we be his disciples, not in name, and by profession merely, but in deed and in truth. May he be formed in our hearts the hope of glory. May his love constrain us to live not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again. May we seek his glory above our chief joy. Whether we live, may we live to the Lord; or whether we die, may we die to the Lord, that living or dying we may be his. May we be crucified with Christ, that Christ may live in us, that the life which we live in the flesh may be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us. May we habitually act faith in him, that we may receive supplies of grace and strength out of his fullness. And do thou guide us with thy counsel while we live, and afterwards bring us to glory, for all that we ask is for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LXI.

SCRIPTURE—1 PETER I.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. Real Christians have abundant cause to stir up their souls to the exercise both of thanksgiving to God and contentment with their condition. How can they ever express or feel sufficiently their obligations to thanksgiving and gratitude to God, for making them the objects of his free, sovereign, electing love, before the foundation of the world; for opening a fountain in his Son's blood to wash them from their sins; and for bestowing on them his Spirit, to conduct them to this blood of sprinkling, and to sanctify and seal them unto the day of redemption? Through eternity they will not be able sufficiently to acknowledge their obligations to God, for this distinguishing, redeeming love. What abundant reason have they, in consideration of being made the objects of God's sovereign, immutable, everlasting love, to acquiesce cheerfully in the arrangements of his providence, in regard to the present disposal of their lot? Those to whom Peter wrote were strangers scattered abroad, through the countries here specified; expelled, it may be, from their native beloved land, by the rage of persecution, and subjected to manifold annoyances, privations, and hardships, in foreign regions. But being elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, sprinkled by the blood of Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit, all things were theirs. They might well reckon that the sufferings of this present

time were not worthy to be compared with the glory that should be revealed in them.

Ver. 3—6. Even the people of God, who are the called according to his purpose, are not always devoid of doubts and fears as to the goodness of their state. In the resurrection of Christ they recognise the evidence and pledge of their own resurrection, and admission into that place which Christ has gone to prepare for them. How precious the heritage of God's chosen. An earthly inheritance is so transitory, that it may be said to perish in the using. But the inheritance of the saints in light is 'incorruptible,' immortal, everlasting. The one is polluted, the other 'undefiled.' The former produces satiety, palling upon the senses, and leading to dissatisfaction and disgust; the latter is ever new and ever fresh, like certain flowers, which are said to retain their odour, verdure and beauty. For the saints, the called of God according to his purpose, this precious inheritance is secured in heaven. 'You are kept,' says the apostle, 'by the power of God,' as in an impregnable garrison, in the view of his all-seeing eye, and under the protection of his Almighty arm. Have believers, then, such security for such an inheritance, have they not cause to rejoice, yea, to rejoice greatly therein? No sufferings they may be called to encounter need extinguish or impair their well-grounded and exalted joy. It is needful for their purification and meetness for glory, that they be tried with adversity and affliction. To men gold is precious. Yet they scruple not to try it in the fire, to purify it from the dross, even though a portion of it should thereby be lost, and though the pure metal secured should afterwards be found to perish in the using. And though God's chosen are more precious to him than gold that perisheth in the using, he scruples not to try them in the furnace of affliction. But he takes care that they lose nothing therein but the dross, and that their refining issues in their imperishable beauty and glory, while it redounds to his eternal honour and praise.

Ver. 10—12. Peter was the apostle of the circumcision. Most of the believing strangers whom, on this occasion, he addressed, were Jewish Christians, who cherished a great veneration for the holy prophets. Peter therefore apprised them that it had been the study of those prophets to search and inquire, with all the intense diligence and eagerness of miners searching for precious ore, into the nature and excellence of gospel blessings, and into the characteristics of the period when the mysterious sufferings of Christ should be accomplished, and should come in unparalleled glory to him as Mediator, and to a benighted and perishing world. The Spirit of Christ testified to these prophets, that not their eyes and ears, but ours, were to be blessed by seeing and hearing the things which it is our privilege to witness, and into which the holy angels display an intense desire and ambition to look.

Ver. 13—21. It becomes God's chosen, in consideration of their surpassing privileges, to exercise habitual watchfulness and sobriety, and to cherish an abiding hope of immortal glory. Having become God's children, they are also to make conscience of conducting themselves 'as obedient children,' with

reverence, love, gratitude, confidence, submission, zeal. God requires conformity to his holy image. And believers are called to cultivate holiness, not merely by a regard to his authority, but by a consideration of the nature and value of the price paid for their redemption, the shedding of the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.'

PRAYER.

Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Thou hast made all things for thyself, that they might show forth all thy praise. Thy works praise thee, thy saints bless thee. Thousands of angels minister unto thee, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before thee. We adore thee for thy kindness to us, the sinful children of men. We thank thee especially for the work of our redemption, by Jesus Christ the Son of thy love. In this chiefly was manifested thy love towards us, that thou gavest thine only begotten Son, that we might live through him. We bless thee that while he sojourned in this world, thou didst repeatedly testify thy complacency in him as our Mediator, and that when he had finished the work which thou gavest him to do, by humbling himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, thou didst raise him from the dead, and give him glory at thy right hand, that our faith and hope might be in thee; that we might know that thou art fully satisfied with his undertaking, and art ready to justify those who believe in him from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. May we obtain redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the richness of thy grace. Bless us with a right to an inheritance among them that are sanctified, through faith that is in him; to that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. And graciously prepare us, by thy dealings and dispensations, for the enjoyment of this pure and blissful inheritance. Sanctify the afflictions wherewith thou seest meet to visit us, that the trial of our faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be held in the fire, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. May we reckon the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall then be revealed in us, if we belong to Christ. May we possess the faith, love, and joy of his disciples. May we recognize his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and rejoice in him as our beloved, and our friend, and the rock of our salvation. En-

able us to realize a growing conformity to thy holy image. Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, may we be transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Since we call thee Father, that without respect of persons, judge according to every man's work, may we pass the time of our sojourning here in thy fear, forasmuch as we know that we have not been redeemed with any corruptible things, such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Now to God, only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CX.

SCRIPTURE—DANIEL XII.

REMARKS.

We have now come to the end of this most interesting book, with respect to which it may be said, that from the minuteness with which it describes so many events that were to take place long after it was written, it tends more to illustrate the argument for the divine inspiration of the bible, arising from the fulfilment of prophecy, than perhaps any other portion of the Scripture. At the same time, there is much in it that yet remains in obscurity, so that the curiosity of those, who would desire an elucidation of every event predicted in it, must stand rebuked, as Daniel did by the words of the angel at the 9th verse, 'Go thy way, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.' Let us be thankful to God for those precious truths contained in this chapter, about which there can be no difference of opinion.

It is to be noticed, first, that after all the troubles which were foretold, as awaiting God's chosen people, in former chapters, a time of deliverance is here spoken of. Michael the first prince, who is generally supposed to be put here for Christ, stands up for them, and through him they will at last be delivered. Just as the book of Revelation closes with words of comfort and encouragement, so does the prophecy of Daniel; and in like manner, when the world's history shall be wound up, we are told that there remaineth a rest for the people of God. Whether or not the 2d and 3d verses were intended to refer to the final judgment, they accord so completely with what is written elsewhere of that momentous period, that we may with profit consider them as referring to it.

The Spirit teaches us in the 3d verse what is true and practical wisdom. Let us seek to be turned to the Lord ourselves, and then, with hearts burning to spread the knowledge of the Saviour among the ignorant, let us strive to turn others to him, so that we may leave the world better than we found it;

and then for our services, imperfect as they are at the best, there is reserved, through the grace of God, a bright reward. How gloriously do the stars shine in the firmament, and how sweetly does their light fall upon this dark world! Yet they are but faint emblems of the glory that awaits the followers of Jesus, when he shall come to be admired of his saints, and of all them that look for him.

Even now the statement contained in the 4th verse is receiving its accomplishment. Many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased. Missionary exertion is now, blessed be God, an object of public interest. The means of communication between distant parts of the world are becoming more and more easy and available, and the dawning at least has appeared of that glorious day when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord. So many different views have been given of the particular dates referred to in the 7th, 11th, and 12th verses, that it would tend rather to perplex than to edify were we especially to allude to them. The church must be contented to wait until these predictions are more fully cleared up in the providence of God.

It is profitable to contemplate the concluding words of the chapter. The prophet was to stand in his lot at the end of the days. There is no assurance here given to him that he might rest with confidence in the fact of his personal acceptance with God through the promised Messiah. The words may, indeed, be thought to imply this; but as there is nothing written in the bible in which sinners individually are authorized to conclude that they are in the number of God's chosen and saved people, nothing which says to you, or to me, that whatever may become of others we are safe; so there was nothing revealed to Daniel which placed him in a different situation from that which we occupy. We have reason to believe that his lot will be on the right hand of the judge at last; that for him one of the many mansions will be provided; yea, that he is now in the presence of Immanuel; but he received no special revelation to that effect. 'Thou shalt stand in thy lot,' says the Spirit of God. The same words are equally applicable to the drunkard, to the impure, and to the sensualist. Each of us shall stand in his lot. 'He that is filthy shall be filthy still, and he that is holy shall be holy still.' May the Lord grant that our lot may be where the Shepherd of Israel feeds his flock, and leads them to living fountains of waters, that we may see that just One, and rejoice with joy unspeakable in his blessed presence.

PRAYER.

Most gracious God, we draw near to thee this morning to thank thee for thy goodness to us, and through our great High Priest to present to thee our morning sacrifice. Thou knowest our hearts, thou art acquainted with our state before thee, all things are naked and open to the eye of the God with whom we have to do. Gracious Father, may all of us who now kneel before thee, and all in whom we feel an interest, be

thine when thou makest up thy jewels. We put our bodies and souls into thy hand; Lord, fit us for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may awake to everlasting life. May we walk under the power of the world to come. May we live as it were under the sound of the trumpet of the archangel. If we are but prepared for enjoying thee, if our robes are made white in the blood of the Lamb, we shall be satisfied. Let the way be thine, for thy way is right, but lead us to the city of habitation. O our God, there was one who wrestled with thee of old, and thou didst hear him, hear us for Jesus' sake. We are poor short-sighted creatures. We cannot know the time which thou hast kept in thine own hand, and we would not seek to know them. Reveal only thy Son in us, and we shall be satisfied. Thy word tells us that the wicked shall do wickedly, and that the wise shall understand. Alas! we have done wickedly, we have not understood, we have not sought after God. But the same word says that now is the accepted time. We would desire to flee from our wickedness, and to turn to thee with full purpose of heart. Our sins, O God, have caused thee to hide thy face from us, but now we come back to thee. May thy Holy Spirit draw each of us, and all our friends, from the path in which destroyers go, and lead us into the way of truth and holiness. May our lot be with Christ. We feel that there can be no blessedness without him, and we know that our souls will be satisfied if they have him as their portion. O gracious God, may we, and all who are dear to us, have our place on the right hand of the throne, when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. Again we bless thee for the mercies of the past night, and of this morning. We would seek to go forth to the duties of the day under the guidance of thy Holy Spirit. And now we commend to thee the work that is thine own. Send forth labourers into thy harvest, thou who art the Lord of the harvest. May many run to and fro, that the knowledge of thee may be increased. May thy way be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all the nations. And may a special blessing rest upon the efforts which are made for the diffusion of the truth among thine ancient people; they have forgotten thee, but thou art found of them that seek thee not. O Lord, cause thy face to shine upon them that they may be saved. And now, O God, may thy mercy be upon us, as we hope in thee. This day make thy grace sufficient for us, and perfect thy strength in our weakness. And may he who stands up for the

children of thy people be with us this day to guard us against the assaults of the wicked one. Lord, hear our prayer, and answer us according to thy mercy, and not according to our imperfect asking, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XV.

SCRIPTURE—1 PETER II.

REMARKS.

This chapter is wholly practical, and contains admonitions that are suitable to us in whatever circumstances we may be placed. First of all, the apostle, in imitation of his divine Master, compares those who have been born again by the Holy Spirit to little children; and the word of God, by which their souls are nourished, to the milk by which the suckling is nourished during the first month of its existence. As the child cleaves to its mother's breast, and there finds every want supplied, so the believer betakes himself to the word, and thence draws all that is needful for direction, for comfort, and for enjoyment. Yea, and the farther he advances in the Christian course, and the nearer he comes to the perfection which he is commanded to attain, with the more child-like simplicity does he draw from the fountain of divine truth, and the more closely and implicitly does he adhere to the word of the living God. We grow in grace, just in proportion to our growing love of the sacred oracles.

In verses 4—7, the church is compared to a building, every true believer being a living stone in that building, and the Lord Jesus being the chief corner-stone on which the whole rests. In ver. 9, 10, the apostle enumerates some of the special privileges that flow to believers through their union to Christ. They are made kings and priests unto God, ranking as the brethren of him who reigns over the holy hill of Sion. In the 11th and 12th verses the apostle insists upon this point. He tells us that the followers of Christ, the partakers of a kingly name, and of a priestly character, are strangers and pilgrims upon earth. With the world's lusts and pleasures they must have nothing to do. They have not time to waste in the pursuits of vanity, as they journey toward the land that is afar off. In the remaining part of the chapter the apostle refers more particularly to the duties of Christians in different situations of life. He first enjoins the duty of submission to rulers. Resistance to lawful authority, when it ordains what is lawful, or at least not contrary to the will of God, is a sin. It is forbidden in many passages of scripture, and is just as manifest a transgression of the divine law, as it would be to do what man commands, when the word of God is plainly against it. We must not pretend that we are justified, in virtue of our Christian liberty, or of any private light which

we enjoy, to bid defiance to civil government, when it enforces nothing that is in itself sinful; but we must not, on the other hand, submit to its enactments, merely because they are issued with authority, when they would require us to do what the scripture expressly forbids. It is better with a safe conscience to suffer for refusing to obey man, than, at the expense of conscience and of principle, to act in opposition to the will of God. Again, the apostle reminds servants of their duties; and enforces them with reference to the example of Christ. The Son of God became the servant of God, in order to work out the salvation of his people. He who was from eternity in the bosom of the Father, made himself of no reputation, and submitted without a murmur to the most undeserved sufferings. What a noble example! Who can occupy a more degraded situation than Christ on earth occupied in the estimation of the unbelieving world? Yet what was his great object? To do the will of him that sent him! He was loaded with contempt, he was exposed to the most injurious treatment. But these things did not move him. He came into the world to suffer and die; and he did suffer and die for us. Shall we then shrink from the post which he has commanded us to occupy? No! if we are called to endure trouble, so was Christ. If we are treated unjustly, so was he! If we are evil spoken of on account of our religion, so was he! Christ is my Master. He died for me; and my purpose is to follow him through life, through eternity. I have been unprofitable. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; but now I desire to return to the Shepherd and Bishop of my soul. Had it not been for his grace, that soul would have been lost, but he has done much for me. To him I dedicate all that I have, and all that I can do. May the Lord enable me to fulfil my resolutions, and may he bless the reading of his word. Amen.

PRAYER.

O righteous and eternal God, we desire to draw near to thee this evening, and to render unto thee our grateful acknowledgments for thy kindness to us throughout the day. Adored be thy name, for the privileges which are promised to thy people, and conferred on them through Jesus Christ. O may we be the temples of the living God, by the Spirit dwelling in us. Our hearts, O Lord, are unfit for the residence of thy Holy Spirit. Impure thoughts, unholy desires, evil tendencies, vain imaginations have their seat there. Alas! there is no place for the King of glory. Yet, O God, cast us not from thy sight. Visit us with thy salvation. Mould our hearts according to thy will. Come and dwell in us; for until thou comest, and preparest for thyself a place, sin will continue to have the dominion over us. O make us kings and priests to thee. As kings, and brethren of him who is the king of Sion, may we have power over our own hearts, and over the

evil one and his emissaries, who would seek to lead us captive. As thy priests, O Lord, may we be holy, and by the Spirit's grace may we ever be enabled to present to thee the sacrifices of believing prayer, and praise, and uniform obedience to thy law. Heavenly Father, we pray that we may ever feel the reality of our condition as pilgrims and sojourners upon earth. Our hearts would lead us to seek our rest here, and many things conspire to make us forgetful of the great eternity. Blessed God, we beseech thee to keep us in mind of our immortal destiny; and may all the lessons and warnings of thy providence, as well as the teaching of thy word and Spirit, confirm us in the pursuit of those things which are unseen and eternal. May our conversation on earth always be such as to cause those who are opposed to thee to perceive that the doctrine of Christ is according to godliness. O that each of us could be made instrumental in turning from the path of destruction were it but one soul. The feeblest instruments are powerful in thy might. Lord, let us ever speak and act so as to diffuse the sweet savour of the Redeemer's name wherever we go, and whatever pursuit we engage in. Once more, O God, we beseech thee to give us grace to keep Christ ever before us. We do take him as the only ground of hope toward thee. We do rely upon his perfect righteousness; O lead us to follow his example. Let that mind which was in him be also in us. May he reign over our hearts, may he by his Spirit make us like himself, that in our varied situations we may all adorn his blessed doctrine, and stop the mouth of the enemy and the blasphemer. And now, O God, bless all who are dear to us, and remember them with the love thou bearest to thine own. Bless all who have ever sought an interest in our prayers, and visit them in mercy. Send the knowledge of the glorious gospel to them that are afar off. And may all who already know the joyful sound, walk in the light of thy countenance. Keep us, O God of Israel, this night; may we be refreshed by sleep, and fitted for the labours of another day, if it is thy will to spare us. Thou keepest Israel. Keep us, O Lord, And O forgive all our trespasses; wash us in the blood of Jesus, and sanctify us wholly to do thy will; that whether we sleep or wake, we may live with Christ. And to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we would ascribe everlasting praise. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 172.

SCRIPTURE—HOSEA V. VI.

REMARKS.

These two chapters are read together, because there is evidently a continuation of the sense from the one to the other. We must remember that the division of the bible into chapters and verses, is purely arbitrary. And although it would be difficult to find a better translation of the scriptures than that which we possess, yet there is nothing to confine us to the precise division into chapters and verses which has been adopted in our authorized version of the bible. Now let it be observed, that in the particular portion of the divine record which has been read this morning, although it forms part of one of the prophetic books, the prophet does not address the people so much in the character of a foreteller of future events, as of a teacher of the will of God, with respect to present duty. He speaks to those among whom he lived, just as any faithful minister would address his flock now; the only difference being, that the message which we have now read was dictated immediately by the Holy Spirit; while at present such declarations as we have in these chapters must stand as the authority upon which the message of the gospel ministry rests. 'We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.' The message of the prophet seems evidently to have been intended for the instruction of two classes of persons: the ten tribes who revolted in the days of Rehoboam, and formed the kingdom of Israel, and who are addressed in prophetic language under the name of Israel or Ephraim; and the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, who continued steadfast in their allegiance to the house of David, and who are generally addressed under the name of Judah. In practically applying the language of the prophet in these chapters, and throughout his whole book, we would perhaps come as near the truth as possible were we to understand by Israel, or Ephraim, those religious professors who have fallen into an open and notorious course of backsliding, thereby bringing disgrace upon their profession; and by Judah, or Benjamin, those who in heart have equally forsaken the Lord, but who maintain generally all the proprieties and decencies which religion enjoins. In the midst of both classes there was to be found a seed that feared the Lord, and called upon his name; but upon the whole, the great majority of both were involved in courses calculated to draw down upon them swift destruction. Let us mark the words of inspiration, and stand in awe!

The 15th verse of this chapter should properly form the first verse of the succeeding one. The threatenings of God are designed to lead sinners to repentance. He will not all at once give them up to their fate! And in the case of his own people who have backslidden from the truth, this is peculiarly remarkable. He does sometimes withdraw from

them the light of his countenance. He consigns them to horror of conscience. He leaves them to learn, from their own experience, how bitter a thing it is to depart from the living God. But all this is done to draw them back again to himself. And hence the comforting and encouraging message which he puts into the mouth of the prophet in the commencement of the 6th chapter. Notwithstanding of all their transgressions, the people are invited to return; their sins are set in array before them, that they may see the evil and choose the good. The language of the prophet is like that of the apostle when he says, 'I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.' And what should our language be in answer to all this kind expostulation, but that of the psalmist; 'We have gone astray like lost sheep; seek thy servants, O Lord, and bring us back to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.'

PRAYER.

O thou righteous and sovereign God, we would draw near to thee this morning in deepest self-abasement, confessing our sins, and imploring thy pardoning mercy. Thou hast favoured us with privileges, and we have misimproved them; thou hast placed us among our fellow-creatures as thy witnesses, and we have been witnesses for sin; thou hast arranged all thy providential dispensations for our good, and we have abused and trampled upon thy mercies. Behold, we are vile, and what shall we answer thee! O Lord, we would desire to return unto thee. We have found no enjoyment in the paths of sin. Our own consciences testify, what thy word also testifies, that the wages of sin is death. We have sought happiness apart from thee, but we have not found it; and now would we seek to be brought back to thee the Fountain of all enjoyment. Blessed be thy name for revealing to us the way in which lost creatures like us may return to God. Thanks be to our heavenly Father for Jesus Christ, his unspeakable gift. O Lord, we bless thee that thou hast been pleased to set him forth as the propitiation for sin, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish. We feel that without him we must perish; but we rejoice to know that through him, and in him, there is life eternal, even for such as we are. Gracious God, we have tried in vain to be saved without him. We would not conceal it from thee, O thou that searchest the heart, that we have endeavoured to heal the wounds of our consciences by many false remedies. We have said, Peace, peace, when there was no peace. But now, O God, we would take him as our peace with whom thou art pleased. What pleases thee, we feel should satisfy us. With his righteousness

thou art pleased, and in the merit of that righteousness we would place our confidence. Jesus delivereth his people from the wrath to come; we pray that we may be delivered from wrath through him. O cast us not from thy sight, because of our past sinfulness, and ingratitude, and unprofitableness, as thy professing people. Lord, we desire to be thine; save thou us. Draw us to thyself by thy Holy Spirit. May he lead us to return to thee. So wayward and blinded are our hearts, that we would never choose thee as our portion. May the Spirit lead us to make the choice. O give us to experience some of the privileges and enjoyments of those who have truly turned to thee. The choicest gifts, O Lord, we dare scarcely implore, but there is all fullness treasured up in Christ; give us what thou knowest to be most needful. Open our hearts to desire more, and to contain more, and then, O God of grace, fill us abundantly with the goodness of thy house. We have been too long satisfied with earthly good, but now we would seek to taste of the blessedness with which thou refreshest the souls of thy chosen people. Heavenly Father, thou hast been pleased to protect us during the night, and to bring us to the light of another day. Accept, for Christ's sake, of our thanksgiving for thy goodness, and be near to us this day to guide us, and to guard us from all evil. O Lord, may we be preserved this day from doing any thing that would dishonour our Christian profession; may we be strengthened for doing what will glorify it. May our footsteps be kept in the way of thy commandments; and in the midst of our worldly duties may we remember that there is a life beyond the present, and that we are here but for a very short time, that we may prepare for the endless eternity. Lord, prepare us thyself for all the duties of time, and for the great realities that lie before us. Into thy hands we put ourselves, O Jehovah, God of truth. May thy rod and thy staff support us during our pilgrimage on earth, and at last may we be advanced to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Hear our prayer, O God; and accept of us, and of our morning sacrifice, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXVIII. 18.

SCRIPTURE—1 PETER III.

REMARKS.

In this chapter, the apostle pursues the train of practical remark begun in the preceding one. We have first the duties of wives pointed out; and if any proof were needed to show that the first followers of the Lord were not carried away by a wild enthusiasm, that they were not visionaries who followed the delusions of an over-heated fancy, we could not find a more conclusive one than these verses furnish. With a minuteness of detail which shows that he was familiar with all the arrangements of domestic life, and that he marked attentively what was passing around him, the apostle lays down rules for the guidance of persons in the married state, which all must acknowledge would, if they were more closely observed, tend to promote in a high degree the present happiness of mankind. From the 1st to the 7th verses he lays down the mutual duties of wives and husbands. The directions which the apostle gives with respect to the decoration of the person are, in spirit at least, equally applicable to either sex. What is the body that all our care should be expended upon it? Can men be justified in adorning that part which must soon be consigned to the corruption of the grave, while they neglect the immortal part, the undying soul? The verses which follow from the 8th to the 16th, allude to several separate duties, and need no lengthened comment. It were a happy world, if we all strove to live in the performance of these gospel precepts. What peace would there be in families, and among neighbours! What mutual enjoyments, where at present all is embittered by strifes and envyings. The 15th verse is peculiarly worthy of remark. The apostle tells us that it is not enough for us to maintain a profession of Christianity; but that we must be able to give a reason for our maintaining it. Most people are Christians because their parents were so, and because they happen to be educated according to the forms of Christianity. They would have been heathens for the reason in other circumstances, although they had been born where they might have heard the gospel preached! We must walk upon surer ground. The bible we know is from God, because it is according to holiness; it was confirmed by miracles, and signs, and wonders, wrought by those who were commissioned to write it; it contains a vast number of predictions, many of which have been manifestly fulfilled; it is precisely suited to the circumstances of the human race, bringing that very salvation within the reach of man which he needs, and over and above all, its blessed influence has been experienced by countless multitudes who have been raised by it from the power of sin to the service of the living God. O let us seek for this experimental evidence of the truth of the scriptures; let us not rest until we are able to say, the bible must be true, because the Spirit whom it promises dwells in our hearts, giving us life, and light, and

peace, and joy. The verses 18—20, are somewhat involved in obscurity, and many opinions have been given respecting them. Without entering into controversy upon the subject, which would not be profitable, we would simply remark, that the whole world might be said to be in prison in the times of Noah, because the flood was threatened, and men were like malefactors about to be led forth to execution. Christ preached by his Spirit unto them for 120 years through Noah, who is called a preacher of righteousness. For it was the Spirit of Christ that taught *all* the prophets, and gave them their messages. Infatuated mortals would not listen to the counsels of the Spirit, and the flood came and swept them away. The ark was a type of Christ, or rather of the salvation which he offers; and so also is baptism, one of the seals of the covenant. Noah and his family were saved in the ark; and so those who are baptized, and who along with the outward sign receive the spiritual grace, who with the outward washing are made partakers of the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ, and of the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, are saved from the wrath to come. It is interesting to notice how the apostle always dwells with delight upon Christ and his work. No sooner does Peter speak of the resurrection of the Lord, than he is hurried away as it were by the glorious theme, and breaks forth into the glowing language, 'Jesus who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject to him.' O what joy and confidence should the thought impart to us, that our Friend, our elder Brother, is at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Our prayers, offered up in faith, will assuredly be answered, when he is there to plead for us. What have we to dread if we are truly united to him as members of his spiritual body? He reigns, and he will reign, until he hath put all enemies under his feet. O that he would reign in our hearts. 'Be opened ye doors, while Jesus knocks, that the king of glory may come in!'

PRAYER.

O thou high and holy One who inhabitest eternity, we would now, before retiring to rest this night, approach the footstool of thy throne of grace, in the all-prevailing name of our great High Priest, who hath gone into the heavens, and is at thy right hand. We would be deeply humbled before thee when we think of our own vileness and unworthiness. O Lord, we have been more attentive to the interests of the perishable body than to the concern of our immortal souls; more disposed to be anxious about what we should eat, and what we should drink, than to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Lord, pity us and pardon us for Christ's sake. O God of all grace, make us all monuments of thy grace and mercy in Christ Jesus. We would all seek to take shelter from the wrath to come in the ark of Christ's righteousness. His we desire to be. Among his saved people let

our names be written. In our hearts may his Spirit dwell; and while the outgoings of the morning and of the evening rejoice over us in providence, our prayer is, that every morning and every evening may find us drawn more and more closely to him who is our Lord, our life, our all. O gracious God, fit us by thy Spirit for the discharge of all the duties which are incumbent upon us. May we discharge them as thy people, with a single eye to thy glory. We bless thee for pointing out to us so clearly the path of duty. We would esteem it a high privilege that we know what duty is, upon thine own authority. Our shortcomings have been fearful, they have been aggravated, they might have justly provoked thee to visit us with thy judgments. But, O Lord, thou delightest in mercy, and in this is our hope. Help us, good Lord, to fulfil all the duties of this life, so as to adorn our Christian profession. We would seek to find pleasure in duty. We would esteem it an honour to live as thine, and to live for thee in the world. Lord, make this not a passing thought, but a firm purpose of our hearts. O give us grace to set Christ ever before us. We desire to take him as our only Saviour, and to follow him as our great example! But what are we, O God, that we should presume to present these petitions at thy footstool! Thy holy law shuts us up under wrath. We are as prisoners, for whom is reserved unending punishment. Adored be thy grace, that we are prisoners of hope. Our trust is in him who died, and who rose again, and who is at thy right hand. We bring our prayers with confidence to thee, because we have in him an all-prevailing advocate. O blessed Jesus, grant unto us that repentance and remission of sin which thou art enabled to bestow. O divine Spirit, take up thy residence in our hearts, and make us in all things what thou wouldst have us to be. Cleanse us from all our sins. Give us fortitude to withstand the attacks of the wicked one. Impart to us a mind conformed to the mind of Christ. Before we leave thy footstool, O thou great parent of the universe, we would beseech thee to send the knowledge of thy truth to those who are in heathen darkness, and to open up a way for its more full diffusion among thine ancient people. The whole earth, O Lord, except a few favoured spots, is full of ignorance and of the habitations of cruelty. Arise, O Lord God, and assert thy saving and converting power among the miserable victims of spiritual death. Send forth labourers into thy harvest, and bless their labours. May thy choicest blessings rest upon all who are dear to

us. May the beauty of the Lord our God be upon them as well as upon us. May we all meet together on the right hand of thy throne, and see him whom we love with joy in the place where there is no night, and no sorrow, and no sin. Unto God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the eternal God, we would ascribe praise everlasting. And through Christ we would expect an answer to our imperfect prayers, because worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive glory, and honour, and blessing.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM IX. 7.

SCRIPTURE—HOSEA VII. VIII.

REMARKS.

In these chapters the prophet is remonstrating with the Jews for their sins, and threatening them with punishment unless they forsake them. The sins of which they are stated to have been guilty are specifically pointed out, so that they could not plead ignorance, or an apology for persevering. Neither the people nor their rulers are excepted; both classes had joined in setting God and his laws at defiance. They are charged with being ungrateful for mercies, with despising the true God and worshipping idols, with incorrigibleness under the chastenings with which they were visited from time to time; while the whole was aggravated by the religious profession they maintained, and the hypocrisy that characterized all their professions of penitence. And having thus sinned, the prophet threatens them with chastening judgments; announcing that their projects would be blasted, that their confidence in idols would bring disappointment; while if these things failed to lead them to repentance, God would at last bring an enemy upon them, and visit them with destruction.

The history of the Jews sufficiently bears out all that the prophet had spoken. What nation so highly favoured, and yet so ungrateful; what people so well instructed in the truths of religion, and yet what people so readily abandoned the service of God? What land so frequently visited by chastenings to bring them to repentance, and yet what land so demonstrated the hollowness of their professions, by frequently returning to iniquity? Chastenings brought no amendment, and therefore the Lord delivered them up at last to the destruction of which they had been warned, and has made them a by-word and a proverb over all the earth.

Let us be warned and instructed by the experience of the ancient Israelites. How signally have we been favoured! The Sun of righteousness has risen above us, with healing beneath his wings. Ours is a land of bibles, and sabbaths, and sanctuaries. Yet alas! have we not to acknowledge that like them we have been ungrateful for the many

mercies bestowed upon us, that like them we have forgotten the Lord who made us, and lightly esteemed the rock of our salvation, giving the affections and homage of our hearts to the *golden* gods of the earth, worshipping the creature rather than the Creator.

But let us not like them despise the chastenings of the Lord; let us 'hear the rod, and who hath appointed it.' Let not our 'goodness be as the morning cloud and the early dew,' lest having thus set at nought the lessons which by his works, as well as by his word, the Almighty was reading us, he may at length say, 'Let them alone, they are wedded to their idols, let them alone,' and reply to us, when at his judgment bar we plead our church goings and our almsgivings, 'Depart from me, I never knew you.' Thus consigning us to a destruction to which that which befel the Israelites is not once to be compared.

PRAYER.

O Lord, to whom alone belongeth all power in heaven and earth; thou mighty God who rulest over all, look down on mercy on us, thine erring and feeble children, as we now at the footstool of thy throne present our humble prayers. Look on us in Christ; see us in the face of thine Anointed; and whilst thou seest us to be poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and altogether vile, remember that worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and for his sake hear us graciously. We have nothing to offer thee but the sacrifice of sinful hearts; but we implore that by thy grace thou wouldst make them holy altars on which to do thee homage. Help us to present ourselves before thee a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to the Lord. We offer up our praises and thanksgivings to thee for the many mercies with which thou has been pleased to bless us. Thou hast cast our lot in a happy and a highly favoured land. Thou hast given us thy word in our own tongue. Thou hast offered for our reception a salvation finished and free. Thou hast filled our cup, and spread our table. Thy hand has led us through the slippery paths of youth. Thine arm has been around us as a shield. From the first moment we opened our eyes on the light of this world, thou hast upholden us. Yet alas! O Lord, what return have we made for all thy goodness? We have forgotten thee the God that made us; we have lightly esteemed thee the rock of our salvation. We have sinned and come short of the glory of God; we have departed from the paths of integrity; we have loved the darkness rather than the light. The Lord pardon our iniquities. The Lord hear us when we cry for forgiveness, and mercifully blot our transgressions out of the book of thy remembrance. Help

us, O Lord, to recognize thy hand in all the events continually occurring around us; and to read thy will in the book of providence, as well as in the book of revelation. Blessed be thy name, that thou art fencing in our way, even as with a hedge, and permitting us not to sin without showing us that thou art angry with sinners every day. Sanctify thy ways of dealing with us. And when thou chastenest us, either as individuals, or families, or communities, O turn us at thy rebuke, and give us, in our happy experience, to confess that even afflictions from thy fatherly hand are blessings in disguise. Take the members of this family, O Father, under thy gracious care. Through this day guide, and uphold, and bless us. Render our efforts all successful, making us to sing for joy and gladness. Give us strength and grace to rise above every temptation we encounter, and enable us to walk as the children of the light. And may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every way, working in us that which is well-pleasing in thy sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom, with thee the Father, and the ever-blessed Spirit, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXIV.

SCRIPTURE—1 PETER IV.

REMARKS.

It is a mistaken and mischievous opinion of the Christian religion, to suppose it to be a system of truths only to be believed, without remembering, at the same time, that these truths, when believed, were designed to produce a salutary effect upon the life. Faith is not a thing to be confined entirely to the bosom; it will prove its existence, and its power, by leading the believer to live as becomes the gospel. If we consult the sacred writers for their opinion on the subject, we will find them invariably joining faith with practice, regarding it as an express contradiction of terms for a man to profess the Christian faith, and yet not to practise Christian morality. Hence we can scarcely read over a single page of the New Testament without observing that its most doctrinal parts are mingled with what is preceptive, intimating most evidently, that the faithful reception of these doctrines would just be as the seed from whence would spring the 'fruits of righteousness,' which would ultimately bring in a rich harvest of holiness to the praise and glory of Christ the Redeemer.

Of such a nature is this chapter. It consists of exhortations: firstly, regarding the duty, and second-

ly, regarding the becoming endurance of those painful dispensations to which, as Christians, we may be exposed. Laying the foundation upon those great first principles of our faith stated at the commencement of the epistle, the apostle goes on to rear the superstructure, by directing attention to the various duties devolving upon us as members of the church, and as members of society. And he shows us that so far from Christian faith being a principle which was to lie dormant and undiscovered in the bosom of the professor, it was one which would regulate our conduct, as well in reference to the highest as the lowest in the kingdom; as well on the great arena of the world, as within the hallowed retreat of the family circle. The bible is not only to be the rule of our faith, but also the guide of our practice; and our guide too in every circumstance and situation in which we can be placed. The apostle having thus directed the attention of the Christian world to the duties required of them, urges them, in this chapter, to the performance of them, by the consideration of the example of Christ, and of the fact that the end of all things is rapidly approaching. We are to have the same mind in us that was in Christ, and hence to live not after the flesh. And because the end is at hand, when every one must give an account of the deeds done in the body, we are to be 'sober,' and 'watch unto prayer,' to be charitable and hospitable, and to employ every gift as 'stewards of the manifold grace of God.' And though in the prosecution of our duty, persecution or opposition may be endured; still the apostle tells us that so far from fainting, we must rejoice, inasmuch as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings, committing the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator. Let us then, not only be hearers, but doers of the word of God. While we read of the wonders of redeeming love, and rely upon the work which Jesus has accomplished, let us recollect that we 'are not our own, but bought with a price, and therefore are bound to glorify God with our bodies and our spirits, which are his.'

PRAYER.

Blessed be thy great name, O Lord, that we, thine unworthy servants, have been protected in safety and peace through the course of another day, and once more permitted to gather ourselves around our family altar. Let our evening prayers ascend into thy presence as the savour of a sweet-smelling sacrifice, and let an answer to our humble supplications be graciously vouchsafed. We thank thee that thou hast thought upon us in our lost condition, and hast not left us to perish for lack of spiritual knowledge. We bless thee that thou hast given us thy word, making known to us the principles we are to believe, and the precepts we are to obey. O may we be enabled to take it as the rule of our faith, and the guide of our practice. May we have our conversation as becometh the gospel, giving all diligence to add to our faith, virtue;

and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity; so that these things being in us, and abounding, we may neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Pardon, we beseech thee, the sins which we have this day committed. Our sins of thought, and word, and deed, Lord, who can reckon? They are more in number than the very stars of heaven. But we bless thee that with thee there is plentiful redemption that thou mayest be sought unto. And therefore we would cry to thee for mercy to pardon us. O let not our sins be remembered against us. And let enlarged supplies of grace be imparted to us, that we may be enabled hereafter to walk in the ways of thy commandments, having the light of our profession so shining, that others seeing our good works may be led to glorify thee our Father in heaven. We offer up our thanksgivings for the goodness which through the course of another day we have been privileged to receive. Thou hast fed us with food convenient for us; thou hast clothed us, and sheltered us from the storm; thou hast kept our bodies in health, and our spirits in peace. And what shall we render to the Lord for his goodness? O that our souls and all that is within us were stirred up to praise and magnify thy name; thou forgivest our iniquities, thou healest our diseases, thou coverest us with loving-kindness and tender mercies. And now, Lord, that the shades of another night have gathered round us, and that we are to close our eyes in slumber, O do thou watch over us, and spare all the members of this family to meet together on another morning. And when we see the light of another day, may our hearts glow with grateful affection to that God who watches over his people as the apple of his eye. Our prayers, O Lord, are before thee. Hear in mercy, and graciously answer, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CIII. 8.

SCRIPTURE—HOSEA XI. XII.

REMARKS.

God, by the mouth of his prophet, intimates here his great goodness to the children of Israel, recapitulating shortly, but comprehensively, the care with which he had watched over them, and the kindness he had conferred on them, from the earliest period of

their national history. He had chosen them from among all the kingdoms of the earth, and made them his peculiar people. But while the Lord had thus highly favoured and blessed them, their ingratitude was such as to have become proverbial. 'They forgot the God that made them, and lightly esteemed the rock of their salvation.' In these chapters they are charged with this ingratitude, and told that their sins were deeply aggravated by the advantages, which, as a people, and as individuals, they had enjoyed. Yet, though threatenings of vengeance are made, there is given, at the same time, gracious intimations of the mercy that is in store for them if they would but 'turn to God; keep mercy and judgment, and wait on God continually.' For while the anger of the Almighty is so excited by their sins, as to cause him to say of Ephraim, 'the sword shall abide on his cities, and they shall consume his branches, and devour them;' yet does he immediately exclaim, as if yearning over his people with more than a father's love, 'how shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man; the holy One in the midst of thee.'

He who thus spoke to his people of old, is still the same. 'He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' What he was in ancient times, he is at the present moment. The mercy which distinguished his conduct towards the Israelites, has distinguished his conduct to the world in all ages. His name and memorial in all generations have been 'the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious.' If we take a survey of our individual history, we will find not only a striking resemblance between God's conduct toward the children of Israel and us, but also between their conduct and ours toward God. Have there not been instances innumerable of God's mercy exhibited in our experience? have not goodness and mercy followed us all the days of our life? Conferring upon us those temporal and spiritual blessings which we require. And yet is it but true, that our hearts, instead of being filled with gratitude, have rather been under the influence of practical indifference? As the Israelites 'sacrificed to Baalim, and burned incense to graven images,' have not we often 'provoked him to anger most bitterly?' O let us remember that no man can harden his heart against the Lord, and yet prosper. Let us remember that however much the 'God of patience' may continue to deal with us graciously, rewarding us not according to our iniquities, but granting opportunities of repentance and amendment, yet if we convert his mercy into an argument for our perseverance in sin, his Spirit may at length cease to strive with us, and he may say, 'let them alone, they are wedded to their idols, let them alone.' Let our privileges, therefore, be diligently improved; let us endeavour by them to 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ.' Let the experience we have had of the mercy, and patience, and love of God,

constrain us to love him in return. And let it be the great object of our lives to exhibit in our conduct the power of redeeming grace, remembering that it is man's chief end to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.'

PRAYER.

Whom have we in the heavens but thee, O God? and there is none upon the earth whom our souls desire besides thee. When our flesh and our hearts are fainting and failing, thou art the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever. Surely, O Lord, we are unworthy of the great privilege of standing in thy presence, and making our requests known to thee by prayer. Pour out upon us the influences of thy Spirit, as a spirit of prayer and supplication, that we may be enabled to come before thee and find acceptance. Lord, teach us how to pray. And do thou, for the sake of Christ Jesus, listen graciously to our humble petitions. We thank thee, O Father, for all the mercies which thou art daily causing to pass before us. As a family, and as individuals, we have experienced much of thy goodness. From our earliest years thou hast cared for us, and led us in safety through the slippery paths of youth. In the midst of our unworthiness, thou hast graciously supplied all our wants, granting us health, and strength, and peace, and all the worldly comforts which our circumstances required. And if in the ways of thy wise yet unsearchable providence, thou hast been pleased to visit us with personal or family afflictions; if thou hast laid thy chastening hand upon us, or called away those that were dear to us, still we rejoice in the hope that thou makest all things work together for good to them who believe, and who are called according to the purpose of God. And therefore, O Lord, upon the review of thy past goodness, we would now call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to be stirred up to bless thy holy name, who forgiveth our iniquities, who healeth all our diseases, who redeemeth our life from destruction, who crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercies, who satisfieth our mouth with good things, so that our youth is renewed as the eagles. But, O Lord, we have to lament our ingratitude, and our unprofitableness. Though thou hast given us, in addition to our temporal blessings, the unspeakable gift of thy Son; though thou hast sent him to seek and save us, and hast given to us the blessed gospel, making known to us the things that belong to our peace, yet have we to confess that we are ungrateful as the recipients of thy bounty, and unprofitable as professing believers in Christ. Like thy people of old we

have compassed thee about with lies and with deceit; for while we have professed to love and serve thee, like them we have gone after strange gods, and served the desires of our corrupted hearts. Lord, hear us when we cry for pardon. Forgive, we entreat thee, all our iniquities. Blot our sins out of the book of thy remembrance, and draw us with the cords of a man, with bands of love, and cause us to turn to thee, to keep mercy and judgment, and wait on our God continually. In the multitude of thy mercies we have been permitted to see the light of another day. Thanks be to thee for the comfortable circumstances in which we are this morning gathered together. Blessed be thy name for the repose we have enjoyed, and the peace thou continuest with us. And now that our avocations cause us to go forth once more to the world, Lord, do thou go with us where we go, and abide with us where we abide, so that we may act ever under the impression that thou, Lord, seest us. Fit us for our duties; enable us to be diligent in business, and fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. God be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause thy face to shine upon us. Save now, we beseech thee, O Lord; we beseech thee, send now prosperity. Let thy blessing rest upon us, let thy presence go with us, let thy Spirit guide us, let thine arm uphold us, let our iniquities be forgiven us, that we may have that peace which the world cannot give us, nor take away. And to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God, be glory and praise, now and ever. Amen

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXV. 9. (*Second Version.*)

SCRIPTURE—I PETER V.

REMARKS.

‘All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.’ The gospel was intended by its Author, not only to reveal to us the principles we were to believe, but also the precepts we were to obey. Hence we find that doctrine and duty are closely and constantly intermingled; the one as the cause, and the other as the effect. For in the whole history of the church, there will not be found one single instance, where true belief of the doctrine of the scriptures did not lead to the observance of the duties that were enjoined. And thus are Christians taught to be ‘doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving our own selves.’

In the present instance, the apostle points out the duty required at the hand of two great classes of the Christian community, whom he calls the ‘elder,’ and the ‘younger.’ The first term may be taken to signify either age or office; and may thus be applied to those who are ‘elders,’ either on account of their years, or on account of the office they sustain in the church of Christ. In the former case, the aged are to be ‘ensamples to the flock,’ setting forth in their conduct the beauty of holiness, becoming, by their actions, preachers of righteousness—living epistles, known and read of all men. In the latter case, the office-bearers of the church are to ‘feed the flock, taking the oversight thereof,’ exercising such a vigilant care over the members of the church, as will have a tendency, by the divine blessing, to prevent their straying into the tempting pastures of sinful enjoyment. For the purpose of stimulating the aged Christian, and the official servant in the house of God, to the faithful discharge of this duty, the apostle tells them that their ‘labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.’ He directs their attention to the period when the ‘chief Shepherd shall appear,’ surrounded by countless myriads of his Father’s angels; when every man shall be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body; and when these ‘elders’ who have served him in his church here, shall ‘receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.’ For they who turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars in the firmament for ever.

The other class to whom this passage is specially addressed the apostle calls the ‘younger,’ which, as it stands connected with the previous phrase, may be taken to signify either those who are young, in respect of their years, or in respect of their place in the church. In reference to the first, they are exhorted to observe and imitate the example of the aged portion of the flock of Christ; they are to be ‘clothed with humility,’ to ‘be sober and vigilant;’ and though their ‘adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,’ while they ‘resist’ him, and remain ‘stedfast in the faith,’ they are to cast ‘all their care upon’ God, ‘for he careth for’ them. In reference to the latter, (the members of the church,) it is the exhortation of the apostle that they ‘submit unto the elder;’ yielding that cheerful obedience to the rule established in the church, which has been found necessary, not only for the maintenance of order, but for the promotion of the spiritual prosperity of the people. And thus both portions of the Christian community observing and discharging their duty, the one being ensample to the flock, and the other submitting to their authority and following in their steps, the body of Christ would be edified; the members of the church would grow together in grace; the cause of religion, while it prospered in our own hearts, would be extending its influence in the world: and the time would thus hasten on when the apostle’s concluding desire would be accomplished, that ‘the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.’ Let the aged Christian, therefore, be as eminent for his virtues as his years;

let the office-bearer in the church exhibit in his life the power and purity of gospel principle; let the young remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and be followers of those who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises; let the members of the church walk as becometh their high vocation; let all be 'provoking each other to love and good works.'

PRAYER.

We bless thee, O Lord, that after the labours and cares of another day we are permitted in peace to meet around our household altar, and present before thee our evening sacrifice. For all the goodness which personally, or as a family, we have experienced, we would desire to give thee thanks. For all the sins we have committed, our sins of thought, and word, and deed, we would ask forgiveness. And now, as we kneel in thy presence, we implore that thou wouldst graciously hear us, and grant our requests. We bless thee that thou didst think upon us in our lost condition; that thou didst devise the plan of redemption, and in due time accomplish it by the sacrifice of thy Son. We thank thee for the everlasting gospel, wherein are revealed the glorious doctrines of salvation. We thank thee for the establishment of thy church on earth, and for the various privileges which within it we enjoy. Oh! that all its members were members of the body of Christ, washed in his blood, sanctified by thy grace, and fitted for duty in this life, and for glory in the life that is to come. Oh! that its office-bearers were all clothed with salvation, that the people may shout for joy, and that the gospel may have free course and be greatly glorified among the people. And Oh! that all professing Christians were enabled to walk as becometh their high vocation, living soberly, righteously, and godly, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. May all of us, O Lord, benefit by the various privileges with which we are favoured. May the example of those who have preceded us, stimulate us to diligence and activity in the service of Christ. May our souls be watered by the preaching of the word, and the administration of ordinances within the sanctuary. May we remember that they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts: and that we having professed ourselves to be his, it is incumbent on us to live in accordance with the precepts of the gospel. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with his benefits, even the God of our salvation. It is God that guideth us with strength, and maketh our way perfect, that hath blessed the work of our hands. Our houses have been safe from fear, and there

hath been no rod of God upon us, so that the voice of rejoicing and salvation hath been heard in our tabernacle from day to day. But especially do we thank thee, that thou hast blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ. Thou hast laid our help on One who is mighty, even Jesus Christ the righteous. Oh! let us who now worship before thee, have a saving interest in the sacrifice he has offered, and let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. The very God of peace sanctify us wholly, and we pray God our whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let the grace of God, which hath appeared unto all men, bringing salvation, teach us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, that we may be rendered unto Christ a peculiar people, zealous of good works. And while we thus thank thee for our own privileges, and implore thy blessing upon them, we would remember at thy throne the case of those who are not so highly favoured. Hear us, O Lord, when we cry to thee on behalf of the benighted heathen, who are yet lying in darkness and the shadow of death. Let the people who sit in darkness, see a great light; and to them who sit in the region and shadow of death, let light spring up. Bring thy seed from the east, and gather them from the west; say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back: bring thy sons from afar, and thy daughters from the ends of the earth. From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, let thy name be great among the Gentiles. And now, O God, thou who makest the outgoings of the evening, as well as of the morning, to rejoice over us, to thee do we commit all that belongs to us. Let our souls return to thee and repose in thee as our rest, because thou hast dealt bountifully with us, so shall our sleep be sweet to us. Let the angels of the Lord encamp round us to deliver us, that we may lie down and none make us afraid. And let these, our humble prayers, be heard and answered, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCII. 12.

SCRIPTURE—HOSEA XIII. XIV.

REMARKS.

CHAP. XIII. In this chapter the prophet Hosea sets before us, in that peculiarly rapid manner which con-

stitutes the characteristic feature of his writings, the fearful extent of Ephraim's idolatry, the heinous aggravations which had accompanied it, and the awful and unavoidable destruction in which it was now at length about to terminate.

This chapter sounds a warning note of the most awful and impressive character. The progress of Ephraim in idolatry is verified in the experience of every impenitent sinner. Arising at first in scarcely perceptible droppings, sin rushes forward in the end with the resistless impetuosity of a desolating flood, breaking down one barrier of restraining grace after another, overwhelming one after another the delusive hopes of its hapless victim; and yet stunning him at the same time into a grosser insensibility to his actual condition; until, having rendered him altogether blind to the destruction towards which it is hurrying him, and deaf to the last lingering call of mercy, which could he but have heard, he might have still been rescued; it precipitates him at length, in a fatal moment, into the overwhelming abyss of reprobation and misery.

O that God would make us wise in time to attend to the things that belong to our peace, before they be for ever hid from our eyes; and that convincing us of our sin and misery, before we be utterly hardened in guilt, he would teach us to flee while a time for escape yet remains for us, to lay hold on the hope set before us in the gospel.

CHAP. XIV. opens with a serious admonition to Israel, to return to that gracious God from whose favour they had fallen by their iniquities. The prophet, in the 2d and 3d verses, puts words of confession and supplication in their mouths, and urges them to place their confidence, in distrust of all their refuges of lies, in him alone in whom the fatherless findeth mercy. In ver. 4—6, God the Saviour himself comes forward, and promises, in terms of the most endearing tenderness, to heal their backslidings, to love them freely, and to fill them with the fullness of his inexhaustible mercy. Ver. 7, describes, in the glowing words of the prophet, speaking again in his own person, the happiness of Ephraim when the day spring from on high shall thus visit him, and the times of refreshing come upon him from the presence of the Lord. In ver. 8, Jehovah puts into his people's mouth the renunciation of their idols, declares that he will hear and answer their prayers, that he will make them flourish like the green fir-tree, and that he will supply them abundantly with the blessings of his grace. This chapter and the prophecies of Hosea, concludes with a solemn declaration on the part of the prophet, infinitely weighty in its matter, and eminently simple and unaffected in its diction, that the wise shall consider and comprehend Jehovah's straight and even ways, and, being justified by his grace, proceed onward in the same, but that those ways shall be to the rebellious transgressors as a rock of offence, and a stone of stumbling. In accordance with the solemn admonition of the prophet, let it be the first and most anxious care of all who read this portion of sacred writ, so replete with the words of grace and truth, to return with singleness and sincerity of heart to that thrice merciful God from whom they have

separated themselves by sin; to take with them words of confession and supplication, and, trusting in the Lord with all their might, to say to him, in humble dependence on his own grace for the perfecting of their resolutions, 'Other lords have had dominion over us, but henceforth will we be called only by thy name.' In the case of all who thus return to him, God will in very deed heal their backslidings and love them freely; he will justify them by his free grace, and cause them to understand his ways, and to walk therein to the saving of their souls. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.'

PRAYER.

Almighty and eternal God, we would desire on every occasion of drawing near unto thee, to adore thee as the greatest, and the wisest, and the best of beings, who art infinitely good in thyself, and who delightest in the communication of good to all thy creatures. O Lord, thou art indeed our God, thou didst separate us from the womb, thou hast made us continually the objects of thy fatherly care, it is in thee alone that we live and move and have our being; yet we have forgotten thee the God that made us, and lightly esteemed thee the rock of our salvation; we have hardened ourselves against thy long-suffering and patient forbearance, and too often have we said in our hearts, Let us go on to sin because grace abounds. We have exposed ourselves to thy just and righteous indignation; most justly mightest thou have consumed us in the fierceness of thine anger, and most justly, in leaving us to reap the bitter fruits of our impenitence and obduracy, mightest thou have glorified the perfections of thy character and the purity of thy government. Times and ways without number have we turned a deaf ear to the calls of thy grace, and steeled our hearts in utter insensibility against the good motions of thy blessed Spirit. It is indeed because thou art God and not man, that we have not long ere now been cut down in our sins; it is because thy compassion flows without failing, that we are still in the land of the living and in the place of hope. But blessed, for ever blessed be thy holy name, there is mercy with thee that thou mayest be feared, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. O Lord, it is in the name of the Saviour alone, and in humble dependence on the infinite merits of his sufferings and death in behalf of sinful men, that we now present ourselves at the footstool of thy throne of mercy, humbly

imploing of thee the forgiveness of our sins, and the reviving influences of thy Spirit of grace. See, God, our shield; look, we beseech thee, on the face of thine Anointed, and for his sake say unto us, as thou didst unto Ephraim of old, I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely. And, O God, enable us with thy servant Ephraim to put away every one the idol of his heart, and to bring into the light of distinct consciousness, and to crucify with an unsparing hand, our most cherished sins. Turn us, O God, from the evil of our ways, and we shall be turned; give us wisdom to understand the deep things of thy holy law, and make us willing, in the power of thy grace, to walk in thy statutes with perfect hearts. Enable us, O God, to set thee the Lord continually before us, and in the exercise of that faith which worketh by love, to acknowledge thee in all our paths, that we may thus go forward from strength to strength, until at last we become meet, through the merits of the Redeemer, to appear before thee in the heavenly Zion. Make us thankful for the refreshing slumbers which we have enjoyed through the past night, and for the mercies which have preceded the dawn of the morning. May we go forth to the labours of the day in thy fear; may we be fitted by thy grace for all its trials, and may its path of duty be made plain to us by the light of thy truth. Bless us, O God, and all in whose welfare we ought to be interested, with the blessings which thou bestowest upon thy chosen ones, for the sake of Him whom thou hearest always; to whom with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, be everlasting praises, now and henceforth. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIX. 165.

SCRIPTURE—2 PETER I.

REMARKS.

The Epistle of Peter, of which this chapter forms the introduction, is generally supposed to have been written by the apostle, and indeed bears internal evidence to that effect, when he had now a near prospect of sealing with his blood the testimony of Jesus. It is addressed to those who had obtained, through the righteousness of God in Christ, the like precious faith with the apostles themselves. The inspired writer, in expressing his anxious desire, that those to whom he wrote might be established in the grace and peace of the everlasting gospel, points out clearly, in a few introductory sentences, the all-important purpose which this gospel is intended to

effect. Such purpose is, that believers might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. In ver. 5—7, he urges upon Christians, in furtherance of the object now mentioned, that, inasmuch as they have received, through the glorious benignity of God shown forth in the Redeemer, all things that pertain unto life and godliness, they should cultivate and cherish more and more assiduously all the graces and virtues of the Christian character; the knowledge of divine truth, the regulation of their own temper and passions, piety towards God, and brotherly-kindness and charity towards their fellow-men. The grounds on which this exhortation is urged by him, are stated with great perspicuity and precision in ver. 8—11. It is, he says, through the abundance of these fruits unto holiness, that the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ makes manifest in the Christian its saving influences, and proves his profession to be founded in truth; whereas, he observes again, if such fruits be wanting, it becomes equally manifest that the light of divine truth hath not yet illumined the soul, that the conversation is not directed by the eye of faith; in fine, that even the essential conditions of the Christian calling are wholly misunderstood. It is, he adds farther, only by the cultivation in himself of the like purity which was in his God and Saviour, that the Christian can assure himself that he has been called of God, that he shall be able to stand in the evil day, and that he shall, with certainty, attain the end of his labour in the salvation of his soul. In ver. 12—15, the apostle, wholly engrossed with the infinite importance of the truths which he had just enunciated, and having his bowels yearning towards his fellow-believers with the deep and unaffected tenderness of genuine Christian sympathy, declares it to be his fixed purpose to employ the brief interval that might yet remain to him in stirring them up to an affectionate remembrance of the truth, and in providing for the continuance of this remembrance upon their minds, when he himself should be removed from his fleshly tabernacle. And the consideration of the important duty in reference to this matter, which he regarded as still incumbent upon him, led him to press upon their attention, in the concluding verses of the chapter, with the utmost earnestness, the indubitable reality of the truths which had been declared to them. The chapter concludes with an affectionate exhortation to professing Christians to revolve in honest and sincere hearts, and with deep and fervent meditation, the confirmation from prophecy of the divine mission and character of Jesus, which the circumstances of his life, and death, and resurrection had made abundantly manifest, waiting with anxious expectation for the time when the day should dawn, and the day-star of the Spirit arise in their hearts.

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever-blessed God, thou art the giver of every good and perfect gift; thou hast bestowed upon us, in Christ Jesus the Saviour, all things that pertain unto life and godliness,

and thou hast given us the exceeding great and precious promises of the aids of thy Spirit, to deliver us from the bondage of corruption, and to reinstate us in the liberty of thy dear children. Grant, we humbly beseech thee, most gracious God, that making our escape through thy grace from the corruption that is in the world through lust, we may become partakers of the divine nature, and have our consciences purged from dead works, to serve thee the living God. May thy Holy Spirit dwelling within us enable us day by day to be adding to our faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. May we abound in those fruits of the Spirit, being deeply impressed with the feeling that it is thus only that we can have the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirits that we have passed from death unto life, and that it is thus only that we can make our calling and election sure; that we can know in our own joyful experience what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, and that we can be confirmed and established in the mind of Christ. Forgive, we earnestly beseech thee, our past abuse of the inestimable privileges which have been so plentifully bestowed upon us. Cut us not down according to our just deserts as cumberers of the ground, but dig about us and dress us, and enable us yet, through the re-animating power of thy grace, to bring forth fruit unto life eternal. Wash us, and make us clean from sin, in that fountain which thou hast opened up for the house of Israel for sin and for uncleanness; renew us in the spirit of our minds; sanctify us wholly by thy truth, and enable us in what may still remain to us of life to redeem the time with redoubled diligence. Fit and prepare us, O most gracious God, for discharging every duty required of us in a manner becoming thy redeemed people, and such as may best promote the advancement and establishment of thy kingdom among men. O make us fellow-workers with thine own Spirit, in reaping the travail of the Redeemer's soul, in promoting the growth of holiness in our own hearts, and in winning our fellow-men to the knowledge, and love, and obedience of the truth. We bless thee, O God, that thou hast established our faith on a sure foundation, that thou hast adapted it to the many wants and weaknesses of our fallen nature, and that thou hast confirmed the mission and doctrine of Jesus as the Messiah, by the manifest fulfilment, in all the circumstances of

his life and death, of the word of prophecy, as well as by signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and especially by his glorious triumph over death and the grave. Enable us, we beseech thee, to give good heed to the precious truths of thy most blessed word, and to wait upon thee in the appointed ordinances of thy grace, with humble and believing hearts. Prepare us more especially, if thou shalt be pleased to spare us to see the light of a new morning, for the solemn duties of the coming Sabbath; may we read and hear the lively oracles of divine truth with deep reverence and attention; may these oracles be applied in season to our souls; and grant, we humbly beseech thee, that while we are yet reading and hearing thy holy word, the quickening Spirit may descend from on high, and cause the day to dawn and the day-star to arise in our hearts. Accept now, most gracious God, the feeble expression of our thanksgiving for all the mercies of the past day and this evening; forgive, we again entreat thee, our many sins and short-comings, and be with us, with all who are near and dear to us, and with all whom we ought to bear upon our minds at a throne of grace, throughout the watches of the ensuing night, to bless us and to do us good, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXII. 13. OR CXXXIII.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CXXXII. CXXXIII.

REMARKS.

PSALM CXXXII. This beautiful psalm is generally understood to have been composed by Solomon on the occasion of the dedication of the temple. It is obviously directly applicable to the circumstances of the Christian church, and, indeed, it is only as thus applied, that the full beauty and strength of the psalmist's expressions come to be perceived. What professing Christian 'can read the vow of David, that he would neither give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eye-lids, until he had found an habitation for 'the mighty God of Jacob,' and yet fail to be impressed with the conviction that an obligation lies upon himself to manifest an anxiety, if possible yet more intense, to find for the same God a living temple in his own heart. If again Solomon rejoiced in the enlarged facilities which *his* times afforded for waiting upon God in the ordinances of his grace, with what emotions of gratitude does it become us to speak of our privileges, before whose eyes Christ hath been set forth crucified; who have

In our hands the now completed volume of God's living word, and who have sounded in our ears, from sabbath to sabbath, the all-encouraging invitations of the everlasting gospel. O that the Lord would arise in his strength, and cause the work of his grace to prosper in the midst of us; that he would enable his ministering servants to rejoice in his righteousness, and to display it in all its beauty and fullness to perishing sinners; and that quickening his word by the energies of his Spirit, he would thus constrain his saints to 'shout aloud for joy.' Then only can we know with certainty that the Lord hath chosen our Zion to be the place of his rest, when his Spirit dwells in our hearts by faith, bearing witness with our own spirits that we are living unto the Lord, having been emancipated from the slavery of sin and Satan, and delivered into the liberty of the sons of God.

PSALM CXXXIII. The language of this psalm is extremely beautiful, describing the blessings which result from the concord and unity of brethren, by figurative expressions of the most appropriate character. Like the precious ointment poured upon the head of the high priest, which flowing down his beard to the skirts of his garment, anointed his whole person, such blessings are represented as diffusing their hallowed influences throughout the entire system both of individual and social life. Like the dews of Hermon that descending on the mountains of Zion, amidst the stillness of the early dawn, communicate fresh beauty and loveliness to every opening plant and flower, invigorating the parched stem and reviving the drooping leaf, the peace and concord of brethren, on which the Lord hath commanded the blessing, even life for evermore, are set forth to us by the psalmist, as a sovereign balm for all the ills of time, restoring the care-worn spirit of man, healing the sorrows of the mourner in Zion, and raising the fainting soul on the wings of love, to contemplate the dawn of that yet more lovely morn when, the Sun of righteousness looking forth in his brightness, not to parch, but to cherish every plant that the hand of the Lord hath planted, shall spring up at once in the full beauty of immortal verdure. If as is generally supposed this beautiful psalm was appointed to be sung by the tribes of Israel, when they assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the solemn festivals which the Lord had appointed, what, let the Christian inquire at the mouth of conscience, are the spirit and temper of mind towards his brethren with which it becomes him to present himself in the courts of the sanctuary. Peace was the gift bequeathed to his church by a departing Saviour; peace had been proclaimed on earth when he first tabernacled among men, and the Prince of peace is the style and title under which he hath been designated by the Spirit of inspiration. It is too evident then, that the heart which is still a stranger to peace, and to that charity which is the bond of perfectness, is no less a stranger to the justifying and sanctifying power of the everlasting gospel.

PRAYER.

Eternal God, thou art the fountain of light and life, thou art the Father of our spirits, thou

art the Creator and preserver of universal nature. On the morning of thy day we desire to draw near unto thee in the name of Christ, and through the aids of his Spirit to worship thee who art a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. Accept us, O God, in the face of thine Anointed; blot out our iniquities from the book of thy remembrance, and bestow upon us in double measure the blessings of thy grace. Prepare our hearts. O God, as places of rest for the ark of the covenant, as living temples of holiness, in which may be celebrated continually the praises of thy glorious and unsearchable mercy. We desire to bless thee with our whole hearts, that while thou didst in former times speak unto our fathers by the prophets, giving them the promise of good things to come; thou hast in these last days spoken unto us, their children, by the mouth of thine only begotten and well-beloved Son, whom thou hast now revealed in all the fullness of grace and truth, and in whom thou hast brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. We bless thee for all that he did, and taught, and suffered on our account, and for all that he is still doing, now that he has ascended up on high to perfect his work in the hearts of his people, and to prepare for them a place of everlasting rest. We bless thee that we have in our hands the precious volume of revealed truth, that we enjoy the privilege of worshipping thee according to the dictates of conscience, no man making us afraid, that the solemnities of the weekly recurring sabbath have it for their object to call off our attention from the things of the world, and to fix it on the enduring realities of eternity; and especially that from our earliest years we have been instructed in the knowledge of our God and Saviour, whom to know in the power of his gospel, is life everlasting. Well doth it become us to exclaim, under emotions of the deepest and most fervent gratitude, Surely the Lord hath done great and wonderful things for us, and things whereof it becometh us to be glad: he hath not dealt so with any people. But alas, Lord, the distinguished privileges which we enjoy can tend only to deepen our condemnation, unless we are enabled, through the aids of the living Spirit of grace, to improve them to thy glory, and to our own good. Forgive, we humbly intreat thee, our past unfruitfulness under the ministry of thy grace, and quicken us henceforth by the power of thy Spirit, that we may yield fruit abundantly unto eternal life. Fill, we beseech thee, the mouths of thy ministering servants among us with the

praises of thine everlasting righteousness, and enable them to show it forth, in all its beauty and fullness, to those among whom thou hast appointed them to labour in holy things; and, O God, make thy people willing in the day of thy power, clothe them with the garment of praise, and cause them to shout aloud for joy. Make the horn of David to bud in Zion, and ordain there thy blessed word as illumined by the light of thine eternal Spirit, to be to thy people for a light to their feet and a lamp unto their paths. Pour forth upon us this day, we beseech thee, the Spirit of prayer and supplication, of love towards thee, our God, and of brotherly-kindness and charity towards our fellow-men. May the prayers of a united people, animated by one common Spirit, and feeling themselves to be members of that spiritual body of which Jesus himself is the living head, and thus also members one of another, united in the bonds of a more than brotherly affection, rise up before thee this day in grateful memorial from the courts of thy sanctuary, and bring down upon us the blessing which thou hast commanded, even life for evermore. Be this day in all the worshipping assemblies of thy people, and carry forth, we beseech thee, to the ends of the earth the preaching of the everlasting gospel. Hasten, for thine own name's sake, and for the glory of thy grace, the happy period when the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and when the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, when the universal church shall be established in love and peace, and when thy will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. Hear us, O God, in heaven thy dwelling-place, and when thou hearest forgive, and send us an answer of mercy and peace, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXIV.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CXXXIV. CXXXV.

REMARKS.

PSALM CXXXIV. This psalm is generally supposed to have been sung by the priests and Levites at and after the time when the worship of God was set up in the second temple upon the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. Some critics, of whom Bishop Lowth is one, are of opinion that it contains the address and response of the parties, one to another, who were entrusted with the duty of keeping a nightly watch over the temple. In this view the first chorus of watchmen are supposed at the end of every stated interval of time, to

have addressed to the second chorus the exhortation to praise contained in the first and second verses, while the parties thus addressed answered the call by pronouncing the blessing recorded in the concluding verse of the psalm. Whether this last conjecture, to which the practice, still prevalent among watchmen in the east, gives some countenance, is or is not founded in truth, it seems quite clear that the psalm in question was used by the priests and Levites in celebrating the praises of Jehovah in his temple. And such having been its use in the dispensation which has passed away, we can be at no loss as to the application to be made of it in the case either of a Christian church, or an individual Christian. Most urgently are we called upon by the whole tenor and spirit of the gospel, and by every part of God's dealings with us, both as a church and as individuals, to make melody in our hearts unto the Lord, alike in the retirement of our closets, and in our solemn assemblies in the courts of the sanctuary, and to pray with unfailing fervour that God would bless his people from his holy hill of Zion, and cause to descend upon their hearts, in rich effusion, the fostering dews of his heavenly grace.

PSALM CXXXV. This beautiful psalm would appear to have been sung by three different choirs: the high priest, with the house of Aaron, constituting the first; the Levites serving in the temple the second; and the congregation of Israel the third; all having their distinct parts, and all at stated intervals uniting in full chorus. It was in the strictest sense of the term a national hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the God of Jacob. The first three verses are occupied with mutual exhortations of the several parties above noticed, by which they affectionately encouraged each other to engage in the delightful duty of giving praise to Jehovah. In the 4th verse the full chorus assign the reason of these mutual exhortations. 'For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.' In ver. 5—7, the greatness of God is shown forth, his universal sovereignty asserted, and proclamation made of the overruling power of his providence over all the elements of the natural world. Ver. 8—12, set forth as grounds of more peculiar thanksgiving, the special interpositions of his providence in behalf of his people of Israel, their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, the slaughter of the kings on the eastern bank of the Jordan, and, finally, the establishment of the posterity of Abraham in the peaceable possession of the goodly land which God had promised to their father to give them for a heritage. Ver. 13, 14, contain a grateful commemoration of the everlasting faithfulness of Jehovah, and of the riches of his grace and mercy toward his chosen inheritance. The congregation of Israel, conscious of their many transgressions and backslidings, take comfort in the thought that God, according to his promise, and the past experience of their nation, would judge his people, and repent himself concerning his servants. Ver. 15—18, contain an indignant reproof of the folly and guilt of idolatry, and evidently contrast, at least by implication, as an ever enduring ground of praise and adoration, the happiness of Israel over the people of the surrounding countries, in having the

living God as their portion, and the superintending providence of the holy One as the rock of their defence. The psalm having, by touching on the stirring topics now enumerated, wound up, as may well be supposed, the heart of every worshipper to a high strain of pure devotional feeling, concludes, as it had commenced, with mutual exhortations to thanksgiving and praise.

PRAYER.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, who art, and who art to come. Thou art glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, the only proper object of all religious homage and veneration. We rejoice to know that thou didst so love the world as to send into it thine only begotten and well-beloved Son, that whosoever should believe on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. We bless thee, that thou hast planted in the midst of us the ministry of the everlasting gospel; that thou hast given us free access to the ordinances of salvation, and that thou hast displayed before our eyes Jesus Christ, and him crucified; that we may obtain redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. O let it not be our condemnation, that light is come into the world, and that we have yet preferred the darkness to the light, through our love of that which is evil. But open our eyes, we beseech thee, that we may see our lost and perishing state by nature, and our unspeakable need of Christ to be our Saviour; that we may see the folly of every ground of trust which has not for its foundation the righteousness of God in Christ, and that we may be led, while the day of grace is yet lengthened out to us, to flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us in the gospel. Impress effectually on our hearts and consciences what we have this day read and heard from thy blessed word, and give us that living faith in its saving truths which worketh by love, which purifieth the heart, and which overcometh the world. Enlighten us by the teaching of thy Spirit from on high, and give us, through him also, the contrite and believing heart, and the submissive and willing mind, that we may be conformed in all things to the pure and spotless example of our divine Redeemer, having the Lord himself formed within us, and being fully established in the mind of Christ. Heavenly Father, make thy grace sufficient for us, perfect thy strength in our weakness, and work in us in all things both to will and to do of thy good pleasure. Forgive, we beseech thee, the sins of our holy things, and more especially the many short-comings and infirmities that have marked the discharge of our religious duties during the past day. Suffer us

not to rest satisfied with any attainment we may have already made, but teach us to press forward day by day with increasing eagerness towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. O God, make it ever the most earnest desire of our hearts, to glorify thee in our bodies and in our spirits which are thine, and to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, that we may win him, and be found in him, not having our own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith. Gracious God, follow with thy effectual blessing the whole religious services in which thy people have been engaged during the past day. Enable all that have named the name of Christ to depart from iniquity, and hasten in its appointed time the joyful period when the whole earth shall become one vast temple of its Maker's praise, and when all thy rational creatures shall be ministering servants at thy holy altar. We would thank thee, now, for all the goodness which thou hast made to pass before us. We would again entreat of thee, the forgiveness of our sins and short-comings, and we would implore for ourselves, and for all whom we ought to have upon our minds at a throne of grace, the watchful care of thy providence throughout the ensuing night. And all that we ask, and hope to receive, we ask in the name, and through the mediation of our great Intercessor, to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, be everlasting praise. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 40—46.

SCRIPTURE—JOEL I.

REMARKS.

There is an uncertainty as to the precise time at which Joel prophesied, but it is generally fixed before the captivity in the days of Uzziah. In this chapter he foretells a terrible calamity as about to come upon Judah, a visitation of divine vengeance, whereby the whole land would be turned into barrenness, and the labour of the husbandman made to fail utterly, so that even the beasts of the field would groan by reason of their privations. He indicates the means also by which this would be effected, drought and a succession of noxious vermin, and calls upon all classes to humble themselves, and to put up their supplications that the threatened judgment might be stayed. When the Almighty purposes to stretch forth his arm in punishment upon a people, how various are the means which he can employ! The resources of all the kingdoms of nature are in his

hand, and he can call forth the ministers of his vengeance from any quarter; even the most insignificant insects which are fully under the power of man, may yet be brought upon us in such numbers as to be altogether overwhelming. To strengthen his description, the prophet, in various parts of the chapter, sets before the eye the images of an actual desolation, speaking of the judgment as already past, and calls upon the old men and all the inhabitants of the land to remember it, and to tell it unto their children, and they again to their children, and so that it should be reported to future generations. It is good for us to treasure up the lessons which we are taught in the school of adversity, to bear them in solemn remembrance upon our souls, and to speak of them to those with whom we are connected. God chastens, from a purpose of mercy; many are brought in affliction to humble themselves before him, and to see, in another view than they had ever done, their highest interests. It is the design of all the divine chastisements, whether national or individual, 'that the people may learn wisdom;' that they may be brought to a true sense of transgression, and to direct their lives with a view to the divine glory. In ver. 5, one class of sinners is appealed to as specially visited in this judgment, inasmuch as through it the means were taken away of their sinful indulgence; drunkards are there required 'to awake because the new wine is cut off.' Ver. 13, 14. In these verses the prophet calls upon the priests, the ministers of the altar, to engage in fasting and other exercises of solemn humiliation and mourning for sin; to convene the elders also, or heads of the people; nay, the whole inhabitants of the land unto this service, that so their united prayers might rise up unto the Lord. Whether the bodily exercise of fasting may accompany it or no, it becomes us ever, in making approach unto the Lord, to strive to possess mortification of the passions and deep feelings of humility and unworthiness, and both in the actual experience of calamity, or having it only in anticipation, to lift up the prayer of humble confidence to him, believing that he will make all things work together for good to them that love him, and seeking either that prospective trouble may be averted, or that if already in the experience of it, we may have grace given to endure and to improve it to the divine glory.

PRAYER.

Draw near now, O Lord, unto us, while we humbly seek to draw near unto thee; give unto us the spirit of grace and of supplication, and that sense of unworthiness and self-abasement, which becomes creatures laden with sin as we are, in making approach to a thrice holy God. We bless and praise thee that amid all our unworthiness, thou hast revealed unto us a way of access, and given us a name to plead which is above every name. We come before thee in the name of the Saviour, humble, penitent, anxious believers; we trust in his name, and beseech thee to look graciously upon us for his sake.

We adore thee as the God of our life, and the author of all our mercies; we give thee thanks for all thy goodness which thou hast made to pass before us. Hitherto, we would say, hath the Lord helped us. Before we knew the hand from which our comforts flowed, or could raise our souls in gratitude to the Author of our mercies, thou didst watch over and sustain the interests of our being. Yet thou art a God of judgment as well as of mercy; thy judgments have been abroad in the earth, thou hast made bare thine arm and smitten the nations; and truly if thou hadst dealt with us according to our deservings, if thou hadst laid justice to the line and equity to the plummet, we had not been here in comfort before thee. We desire to remember, O Lord, that we are monuments each one of us of thy great long-suffering, that it is because thy thoughts are not as ours, nor thy ways as ours, that we are still in the place of hope. O give us a sanctified use of the dealings of thy providence, as they are declared in thy word. May they come home with power to our souls; may thy long-suffering in our own case lead us to repentance, to a devoted and faithful living unto thee, lest this threatening of thy word be at last fulfilled on us, 'he that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.' Help us, Lord, to feel our dependence upon thee for life, and breath, and all things; that with all our superiority over the other creatures of this lower world, we are yet as dependent as the meanest of them, and have nothing that we have not received; that in spiritual things also, as well as in temporal, the blessing cometh from above; while Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, that the increase is from the Lord. O may the good seed of the word be implanted and take deep root in our souls; may it be watered with the dew of thy blessing, and be manifested abroad in fruits of righteousness to thy glory. In all circumstances, O God, we will look unto thee; what time our hearts are overwhelmed and in perplexity, do thou lead us unto the Rock of ages. Give unto us to experience protection under its shade, and refreshing and comfort from the stream of blessing that flows from it. Grant that this spiritual rock may follow us through the burden and heat of this day; enable us to realize through the course of it a sense of thy presence, and to experience the direction and aid of thy Spirit, and in all that we put our hand unto, have a regard to thy glory. Hear us in Christ, and accept of us for his sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 7—10.

SCRIPTURE—2 PETER II.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—3. The apostle, in these verses, gives warning of the danger arising from perverting the truth, and speaks of the numbers that would be deceived by it, and of the certainty with which they were treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath. It is a warning which is applicable to the church in every age; it should ever be a primary object to preserve the truth in its purity, and to this end it becomes every faithful disciple to co-operate, to bear about with him our Lord's declaration, 'ye are the salt of the earth, the light of the world;' and his searching appeal to all professing believers, 'if the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness.' Ver. 4—11. Here the apostle speaks of the avenging justice of God upon the angels who sinned, and how the same was fulfilled on two remarkable occasions on the ungodly of the human race, adducing also pleasing examples of the deliverance of the godly in these latter judgments, how the remnant of the faithful, the true seed, was spared. Even in the most corrupt times, God has had a seed in the earth, a few witnesses for his name and cause; and it is a very sustaining assurance that he knoweth how to deliver these in all seasons of tribulation, that he will not forsake them utterly, but will be the comfort and stay of them that fear him, while the unjust will be reserved unto the day of judgment to be punished. Ver. 12—16. The previous declaration of certain judgment, swift destruction impending over the ungodly and despisers of the truth, had been made, and there follows here a more special description of those who were involved in this condemnation of the peculiar vices by which they were enslaved. In reviewing these, the leading characteristics are pride, covetousness, and sensuality. The whole passage forms a striking comment on the words of the Psalmist, 'the wicked, through the pride of his countenance, doth not seek after God. God is not in all his thoughts.' Ver. 17. Here a simile is introduced, descriptive of the hollowness and deceitful nature of the prospects of happiness that are held forth by the parties before referred to, they are called 'wells without water,' to show that nothing really refreshing and sustaining to the soul can flow from their principles. The apostle Jude employs a somewhat similar figure in describing like characters, 'clouds they are,' he says, 'without water, carried about of winds;' their end of destruction is also noted in the words, 'to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.' Ver. 18, 19. In these verses, the apostle speaks of the power of seducing and leading away others that was possessed by the class of persons whom he had described, a power so great that it often drew within its fatal influence those who had been able to escape from the grosser pollutions. The seducers had upon their lips the promise of liberty, while they were alluring them into the

greatest slavery that is known, the slavery of inward devouring lust. Ver. 20—22. Here the high degree of guilt of parties so yielding, is declared. If some sins in themselves, by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others, it is the uniform assurance of scripture that those persons incur a very heavy condemnation, who fall back into debasing sins after they had in some measure entered on a life of piety. God is more dishonoured, and the cause of religion suffers more from the apostacy of such individuals, than even from the uniform course of the habitual sinner. The words of the concluding verse are most significantly descriptive of their moral deformity.

PRAYER.

We desire, O Lord, at the close of another day, to draw near unto thee, and to present our united tribute of thanksgiving and praise for thy gracious providence which hath watched over us throughout it. We desire to humble ourselves before thee, on account of our sins of the past day, of thought, of word, and of deed; we beseech thee to look in mercy upon us, cause thy countenance yet to shine upon us, and we shall be saved. We bless thy name for thy word, which thou hast given us for a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path. O incline our hearts ever so to adopt it; and when at any time dubious paths may perplex the mind, may we turn to this guide, and in its faithful counsels trace the path of duty; may we see written, even as with a sunbeam, This is the way, walk ye in it. O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? In the blindness of their hearts men have sought to pervert it, even to wrest the scripture to the ruin of souls; do thou dispel the mists of human prejudice and error by which it may ever be attempted to darken it, and through thy grace may we be enabled to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. May thy law be our delight. Like thy servant of old, may we be able to say of thy testimonies, More to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey comb. Our times are in thy hand, thou numberest the days of our generations here; by the more awful dispensations of thy providence, or in the silent course of ordinary nature, we are speedily removed from this earthly scene, and the place that knoweth us now, knows us no more. Impress our minds, O Lord, with a becoming sense of the shortness and uncertainty of the period of our present being, that we may not crowd its little span with those things that are displeasing in thy sight, and which will be recorded in awful characters against us in heaven. May thy judgments which have been abroad in the earth, touch our hearts, and lead us, in this

our day to seek for the things which belong to our peace, before they be for ever hid from our eyes. Leave us not, O God, unto ourselves; we have to mourn over the power of depravity within us, a law in our members which warreth against the law of our mind. O give us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord; dethrone the god of this world in our souls, and reign thyself there, to the bringing every thought, and feeling, and desire into captivity to the love of Christ. In the service of sin, which thou hatest, may we never seek for our happiness; save us from the fatal influence of those who would persuade us to seek it in such a source; and if we have been favoured ever to taste, even in smallest measure, the comfort of thy service and the joys of the Spirit, O suffer us not again to be entangled in the yoke of bondage; to be found in the dark scenes of earthly pollution. But may our path be as that of the sun when he goeth forth in his strength, shining more and more unto the perfect day; may our evidences become clearer both unto ourselves and to others, that thy glory is our object, and that heaven is our end. Watch over us during the silence of the coming night; spare us to see the light of a new day, and to enter upon its duties. May we rise to engage in them in the fear of the Lord, to maintain a witness for thee. Hear us in the Son of thy love, and accept of us for his sake.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLVI. 8—11.

SCRIPTURE—JERL II.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—12. In language highly figurative, and of great sublimity, the prophet continues his description of the coming desolation, and speaks of the feeling of utter dismay and horror with which it would possess the whole inhabitants of the land. The priests are directed to blow the trumpet in Zion, to proclaim the impending judgment, that all classes might humble themselves, and put up their prayers that the Lord would either modify or avert it. And if in respect of temporal calamity the priests were directed to sound an alarm, to call unto repentance and humiliation, how much more does it become ministers of the Lord, now, and in all time, to cry aloud nor spare, but to lift up their voice like a trumpet, and give warning of a future day of vengeance, with all earnestness to entreat sinners to flee from 'the wrath to come.' Ver. 12—15. In these verses the prophet exhorts again to fasting and humiliation, and declares the spirit in which these exercises are to be gone about. In the immediately succeeding

verses he renews his exhortations to this duty, and with yet greater earnestness than ever. The priests, the ministers of the Lord, are called upon again to sound an alarm, to sanctify a fast; and there is a more minute description than in any preceding passage of those who are to join in it. Infants sucking the breast, even are mentioned; their parents were to bring them along with them into the courts of the temple, in order that their own feelings might be more deeply affected with the thought of the privations and sufferings in which their helpless offspring might be involved; the bridegroom, also, was directed, to leave his chamber, and the bride to go forth of her closet; all other interests whatsoever were to be suspended in order that the whole people might unite in the exercises of humiliation and prayer. There is something solemn and affecting in all this. Ver. 18, 21, 27. The promise is held forth that the Lord will be entreated for, and pity his people; that he will not permit them to be a perpetual reproach; and there is no doubt that the prayers of the faithful will ever come up with acceptance to heaven; and for the sake of the remnant of such in any land, the Almighty often tempers his judgments, and in his good time removes them wholly; the tares are not rooted up lest the wheat should be destroyed with them. Large promise even is given of returning plenty, and Zion's children are directed to rejoice in the Lord because of it, with thankfulness to acknowledge the hand whence their deliverance hath come. Ver. 28, 32. The chapter concludes with a most precious and sustaining promise, bearing distinctly upon gospel times, the promise of an abundant out-pouring of the grace of the divine Spirit upon all classes in the latter days. The apostle Peter expressly referred to this promise on the day of Pentecost, and declared its being then in a measure fulfilled in the gift of tongues bestowed upon the twelve. It is still in the course of accomplishment, and we may warrantably look forward to a time when it will be fulfilled on a scale far beyond any thing that has yet been witnessed; and the daily prayer of the believer will rise to heaven, that God in his mercy would hasten it in his time.

PRAYER.

On this morning of a new day we desire, O Lord, to present ourselves before thee; with prayer and thanksgiving, to draw near unto the footstool of thy throne. Who shall not fear thee, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy? We have heard with our ears; the writings of the fathers have told us, what wonderful works thou didst in their days. Truly thou hast an arm that is full of power, strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand; thou art clothed with honour and with majesty; clouds and darkness are round about thee, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of thy throne. We are unworthy to come into thy presence. O that we may feel our unworthiness, and be enabled in drawing near to rend our hearts in true contri-

tion before thee, with godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of; to mourn over own backslidings. Times and ways without number, O Lord, we have forgotten thee; we have wandered upon the mountains of sin and vanity, and the God in whose hand our breath is, have we not glorified. We have to lament sin committed, and duties omitted, opportunities lost in which we might have witnessed more faithfully for thee, and more resolutely maintained thy cause. O be merciful unto us, and pardon our iniquity, for it is great; far as we have wandered, and grievously as we have sinned, do thou yet remember us with favour; visit us with thy salvation, that we may see the good of thy chosen, and rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that we may glory with thine inheritance. We rejoice to know that when thou afflictest, thou afflictest not willingly, but for profit, and that behind the gloom of a present frowning providence there is distinguishable, by the eye of faith, the smile of a heavenly Father's love; great are thy promises of returning favour to thy people when they truly humble themselves under thy chastening hand. O give us a sanctified use of all thy dispensations; make them instrumental in bringing us nearer to thyself, in subduing the enmity of our hearts, and leading us to set our affections upon those things which are above, whence we look for thy coming. Help us to maintain upon our souls an expectation of thy coming, and to cultivate a preparedness and meetness for it. May we remember that we have no continuing city here, but are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, as were all our fathers; may we seek ever to possess the feelings of pilgrims; and by the whole tone of our life and conversation declare plainly that we seek a country, even an heavenly. We bless thy name that we are able, in full assurance of faith, to look forward unto a time of great spiritual refreshing from thy presence. We humbly pray thee for a measure of this blessing now, and that our souls may be thus visited individually. Quicken us, Lord, yet more to thy love; may our desire be yet more toward thy service and our aim yet more for thy glory. Revive thy work in our neighbourhood, and in this family, and throughout the earth may thy kingdom come. Direct and be with us this day; may we be faithful in all things to thy cause, remembering the vows which we have left at thine altar. Accept of us, and vouchsafe unto us an answer in peace, for the Lord Jesus' sake, Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXII. 11.

SCRIPTURE—2 PETER III.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1, 2. The apostle declares in these verses, as in another part of this epistle, chap. i. 12, 13, that his purpose in writing it was more to enforce upon the minds of the brethren the truths which they knew, the doctrines in which they had already been instructed, than to bring before them any new or farther revelations. He proceeds to give warning, ver. 3—5, of corruptions that would prevail in the latter days, of the spirit of infidelity which would especially appear, of the springing up of a class of men walking after their own lusts; who in order that they might indulge these lusts with a greater feeling of security, would attack the very foundations of religion, and by means of scoffing and ridicule strive to bear down its most solemn truths. He declares how they would especially deride the doctrine of the Lord's second coming to judgment.

Ver. 7. In regard to the second and final destruction of the world, the apostle intimates here that other parts of scriptures also confirm that it will be effected through the agency of fire; that the material heavens which we behold, and the earth also upon which we dwell, shall be burnt up at last before the great and awful day of the Lord come. Ver. 8—11. Here we are reminded that the ordinary divisions of time which obtain among men are as nothing in respect of that eternity with which all the purposes of God are connected, and that it becomes us to take this into account when we should ever think that the fulfilment of the divine promises is delayed. What seems delay unto us, and on account of which perhaps we may even feel impatience, we may rest assured is according to the purpose and mind of the Eternal. Delay of the divine judgments is ascribed to the long suffering of God, who delighteth not in the death of the sinner, but rather that he would turn from his sin and live. Ver. 10—13. But we are reminded immediately that a day of vengeance, and of destruction of the whole frame of the universe, will come. O let us remember that the day of our death will be the same unto us as the day when these awful convulsions shall be; and since it is alike uncertain to all, let us take home the appeal of the apostle: 'Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness.' Ver. 13. Our thoughts are directed next to that new and more glorious scene of things which shall be called into existence immediately after the present frame of the universe shall have been dissolved. Ver. 14. In the prospect of these glories, the apostle exhorts again to diligence in the use of the means of grace, that so believers may be found of the Lord without spot at his coming, and farther to account the divine long-suffering, the lengthening out unto them of opportunities of salvation to be the very mean of preparing them for glory and felicity. Ver. 15, 16. In terms of much affection and tenderness he next refers to his fellow-

labourer in the Lord, the apostle of the Gentiles, and notes a peculiarity in his epistles. The writings of St Paul perhaps enter more into the deep things of God than other parts of scripture; but if there were no mysteries in the bible, it would want one important proof of being a revelation from heaven. Let us beware of wresting any part of it. Ver. 17, 18. After the solemn truths which the apostle had delivered, he closes his epistle with an exhortation to steadfastness and growth in grace. We should bear ever in mind that the Christian state is one of growth or progress; there is no standing still in it. If we are not making attainment in spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, we may rest assured that we are falling back, that the enemy of our souls is gaining upon us.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we desire this evening to bow ourselves before thee; with the humble confidence of children to draw near in the service of adoration and praise. We adore thee as the self-existent Jehovah who art from everlasting to everlasting, who sittest upon the throne of the universe, and rulest the affairs of all worlds. One day is with thee as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; when thou hast proposed, none can disannul it; when thou hast stretched forth thine arm, none can turn it back. We are of few days; as a flower we come forth and are cut down, our life flieth as a shadow, and there is none abiding. Every thing connected with our existence here is transient and perishing; thy word assures us that even the heavens which we behold shall vanish away as the cloud that covers them, and that the earth on which we tread shall dissolve like a morning-dream; that they who dwell therein shall die in like manner. We believe these solemn revelations. O may they possess over us a constraining influence; may they lead us to moderate our anxieties after the treasures of earth; to strive to sit lightly to all mere worldly joys or sorrows, and with increasing desire to seek for an inheritance and portion in heaven. Thou hast veiled in solemn mystery, from all created beings, the time of thy second coming; and hast concealed in mercy from us the period when our frail bodies shall return to the dust whence they were taken, and our souls pass upward to judgment. Through weakness of our flesh we could not bear the disclosures, yet, O may the uncertainty which hangs over an issue so momentous, lead us to watch and be sober, so as this day may not come upon us unawares. In whatsoever our hand findeth to do may we be diligent, that when the Lord cometh we may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless. Help us to keep our eyes steadily fixed on the promised

glories of immortality, amid the troubles of life to remember that there remaineth a rest for the people of God, and under the discouragements in thy service to take comfort from the assurance that in due season we shall reap if we faint not. Regard us individually as worshippers before thee; enlighten what is dark within us, quicken what is dead to thy love, confirm what is wavering, and enable us to follow on yet more to know the Lord, to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We pray for those with whom we are more immediately connected, kindred and friends, may their souls prosper. We pray for all our brethren of the world; may thy word have free course, and be glorified; may the Redeemer see largely of the travail of his soul. Take us this night under thy divine protection; grant us in thy great mercy to rest in peace, and to rise in comfort, with our bodies invigorated, and our souls refreshed from on high; may we be permitted to enter upon the duties and trials of a new day. Hear us in the Beloved, and accept of us for his sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CII. 13.

SCRIPTURE—JOEL III.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—8. In the close of the former chapter, the prophet had foretold the judgments, which after the introduction of the gospel, were to be executed on the unbelieving Jews. In prophetic vision, his mind is carried over the many dark centuries, during which the chosen people were to be scattered and oppressed, to the time of their glorious restoration. He notices the various indignities and cruelties which in various ages the Jewish people have suffered at the hands of their enemies; their children bartered as the price of the basest pleasures; their sacred things dedicated to the service of idols; and themselves removed into captivity far from their border. God will 'swiftly' recompense their oppressors. 'He was but a little angry, and they helped forward the affliction.' Even in their state of dispersion and degradation, the seed of Israel are still 'beloved for the fathers' sakes.' God's judgments have accordingly been signally executed already upon various nations which have oppressed his people. But the particular prediction now before us remains yet unfulfilled.

Let us here learn the guilt and danger of oppression. 'He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy.' Especially, when exercised against the people of God, 'he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye.' Observe also the

origin of this sin; man even in his fallen state has seldom any delight in cruelty for its own sake; it springs from lust, the lust of power, of money, of pleasure. 'Whence come wars and fightings among you.' 'Even from your lusts;' let us crucify our lusts, and thus we shall strike at 'the root of all evil.'

Ver. 9—17. These verses present us with a sublime view of the conflict in which the enemies of God's cause and people are finally to be overthrown. They are first summoned to prepare for war, as it were once for all to try their strength against the Almighty. It will be a season of alarm and trial to the righteous; but as in the time of Jehoshaphat, 'the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.' The combination of the wicked against God's design having issued in their utter destruction, will only prove the means of ushering in the glorious establishment of righteousness in the earth. Parallel predictions will be found in Isaiah lxvi. 15, to the end; Ezek. xxxviii. xxxix.; Zech. xiv. 12, to the end. But when Israel's blindness shall be removed, 'the fullness of the Gentiles' shall also 'come in.' Accordingly, we find events corresponding to those here set before the nation of Israel foretold also with reference to the church at large, Rev. xi.; xiv. 14—20; xvi. 13—16; xix. 11, to the end, compared with xx. 1—3.

The 1260 years, repeatedly fixed in prophecy as the period of Antichrist's reign, is now, perhaps, drawing to a close, and about the time of its expiry these grand events will begin to be fulfilled. Let us watch against specious and prevailing errors, and take heed that we be found on the Lord's side. Having God's sure testimonies for our guide, we can afford to despise the vain pretensions of what is called the spirit of the age; which, it appears, will prove in the end a spirit of desperate hostility to divine truth. Let us 'keep the word of Christ's patience, and he will keep us from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.'

Ver. 18—21. God's outcast people, now gathered from the heathen, and freed from the intrusion of aliens and uncircumcised, shall dwell safely, rejoicing in the blessings of Messiah's reign; while the life-giving streams of salvation will go forth from the house of the Lord, to bless the desert places of the earth. In the effects of God's judgments on their enemies, the chosen people will have a perpetual memorial of their interest in the covenant-protection of an Almighty arm; and in the presence and blessing of Him who dwelleth in Zion, they will have a joyful pledge that the 'blood' which their fathers shed on Calvary has at length been 'cleansed.'

May we be found waiting for Christ's coming, keeping our garments undefiled, that we may be accounted meet, in the possession of such joys as these, to live and reign with him, whether on earth or in heaven.

PRAYER.

O thou supreme Creator, and most righteous Governor of the universe, who doest according

to thy will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, we adore thy majesty, we stand in awe before thy mighty power. Thou seest and declarest the end from the beginning, and orderest all events for the furtherance of thy glory, and for the good of thine Israel. We would trust in thy providence; we would rest in thy promises; we would wait and pray for the coming of thy kingdom, and for the establishment and consolation of thy redeemed people. We beseech thee, O Lord, to look in mercy on thine ancient and outcast people. Rebuke and turn the hearts of their persecutors; especially deliver them from the bondage of a hardened and unbelieving mind, and set them again in their own land, that they may declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; that the heathen may fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth his glory. O thou who hast purchased thy church with thine own blood, do thou protect, and guide, and sustain, and abundantly bless thy believing people of every name. Keep them from the evil that is in the world. Enable them to glorify thee by their faithful testimony for thy truth, and their holy and unblameable conversation. Prepare them for the trials that are to come upon the earth. Shorten the times of tribulation, and hasten the universal prevalence of righteousness, and truth, and peace. Be pleased speedily to remove every obstacle to the progress of thy work. Let Zion's watchmen see eye to eye. Grant a spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind, to thy weak and distracted church. Let not Ephraim envy Judah, or Judah vex Ephraim, but let them join in withstanding thine enemies and their own. Bruise Satan under thy people's feet. Defeat his rage. Turn his craft into foolishness. Expose the delusions of Antichrist. Consume that Man of sin by the breath of thy mouth, and the brightness of thy coming, and let there be no enemy to hurt or to offend in all thy holy mountain. We give thee united thanks for the rest of the night, and for the renewed tokens of thy bountiful kindness with the opening of a new day. Enable us to glorify thee in thine undeserved gifts. O let thy good hand be upon us for good this day. Suffer us not to be moved from our fidelity to thee. Keep us from all outward, and from all spiritual ill, and preserve us even to thy heavenly kingdom, for Christ Jesus' sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXXVIII. 8.

SCRIPTURE—1 JOHN I.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—4. The apostle John commences this epistle, as he does also his Gospel, by declaring Christ the Word of Life, his eternal Godhead, and his real manhood. This is the 'great mystery of godliness—*God manifest in the flesh.*' It is besides the only foundation of true godliness, and therefore the apostle is careful to present it to Christians as the motive of every duty, and the ground of all holy joy. He declares this truth as having been himself a witness of it. To him and the other apostles, the Word of life was specially manifested. As respected his body, they looked upon him with their eyes, and their hands handled him. As regarded his divine nature, they beheld his glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. What they had seen and heard, they now declared, for no selfish ends, neither for the gratification of a vain curiosity in others, but that others might be joined with themselves in holy fellowship with God and with Christ. How grand and benevolent the design! Through sin all mankind have lost communion with God, and have thus fallen into an estate of misery. Through the knowledge of the divine Redeemer, those who are afar off are made nigh to God by the blood of Jesus, and in this gracious change they attain to a pure, a full, and an unchangeable joy. It appears then that they only know the gospel message aright, who have tasted this blessed fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Ver. 5—7. The apostle having announced a message of mercy, next proceeds to guard it from abuse. With views of infinite mercy, Jesus Christ had come to make known God; but he had made him known as a holy God, not only 'love' but 'light,' in whom is 'no darkness at all.' The sinner then, as he walks in darkness, can have no fellowship with God. On the other hand, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we shall receive ever-increasing tokens of the divine favour and blessing, being advanced in all the graces and privileges of the Christian life. The Spirit of God delights to apply the precious blood of Christ, in all its peace-speaking and sanctifying power, to a soul which is separating itself from the unclean thing, and seeking to be purified as a temple of the Holy Ghost.

Ver. 8—10. The apostle next shows how this blessedness is to be acquired and maintained. To be thus exalted by God, we must ever humble ourselves. From the beginning of our Christian course to the end of it, we are to lie low under a conviction of our sinfulness, and by the confession of our by-gone and our daily repeated offences, seek the renewed application of Christ's saving blood. 'The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.' The gracious Saviour will leave the proud and self-satisfied to perish in the 'filthy rags' of which they boast. How encouraging to the convinced and anxious inquirer, to be assured that the

very confession of his sin, and the mere complaint of his misery, will procure for him the Almighty deliverance which he needs.

PRAYER.

O thou Almighty and most glorious Father, thou eternal Life, who givest life to thy creatures, and thyself derivest it from none; thou uncreated light, in whom is no darkness at all, we, the unworthy creatures of thy hand, would bow before thy footstool in deepest reverence and humility. How shall we find acceptance in thy sight? We are but of yesterday, feeble, ignorant, and wholly dependent on thee, and yet we have sinned; we have wandered far from the most pure light of thy presence; we have walked in darkness, and by our unfruitful works of darkness we have oftentimes provoked thy righteous wrath. Oh! we thank thee that thou hast pitied us in our guilty and miserable estate; that thou hast sent thy dear Son to deliver us, and to restore us to light and life with thyself. Blessed be thy name for the privilege of confessing our sins, and returning to thee as a Father, compassionate and reconciled through the blood of Jesus Christ. Do thou now pity us; accept and heal us, O our Father in heaven. For Jesus' sake, forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. O thou eternal and most blessed Word, thou only Light and Life of a fallen world, we bless thee for thy designs of love, conceived while in the bosom of the Father, towards the sinful children of men. We praise thee, that in the fullness of time thou didst become manifest in the flesh, submitting to be born of a woman, and to carry our griefs, and to bear our infirmities; especially that thou didst endure an accursed death, that thus becoming sin for us, we might be made the righteousness of God in thee. Let us gladly receive the testimony of them who saw and believed, that we may obtain the blessedness of those who have not seen and yet have believed. For this end send thy Holy Spirit of promise into our hearts. O vouchsafe yet more and more of the gift of thy good Spirit, that we may know thee not only by the hearing of the ear, but in the daily and blessed experience of our souls; that in holy fellowship with thee and with all saints, our joy may be full, and that we may abound in the fruits of righteousness which are to thy praise. We thank thee, O Lord, for thy continued and unmerited goodness; that the outgoings of the morning and the evening are still made to rejoice over us. We commit ourselves, and all who are dear to us, to thy keeping this night. Under a sense of thy blessing, let us lie down

and not be afraid, and so our sleep shall be sweet. On a new day may we rise to praise thee, and let goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life. Look in mercy on all who are in distress. Give them a speedy issue out of their afflictions; meantime be pleased to sustain, to comfort, and to sanctify them. Prepare the dying for their great change. Give them a victory over death, and him who has the power of death, by faith in Jesus. We pray for the good estate of thy church. Do thou purify, and extend, and protect it. God be merciful unto us as a professing people, and bless us, and so his way shall be known upon the earth, and his saving health unto all nations. Hear, and answer, and accept us, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM II.

SCRIPTURE—AMOS I.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1. The prophet Amos informs us here, and in another place, that he was an herdsman. He was not furnished with the qualifications of human learning like those trained for their office in the schools of the prophets. We ought to engage every lawful outward means in furthering the knowledge of divine truth; but God acting as a sovereign has often chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, by the extraordinary gifts of his Spirit conferring on them qualifications for their mission far beyond the reach of human labour or skill.

Ver. 2. God dwelt in Zion on a mercy-seat. Yet out of Zion was he to roar when chastening his people, and executing judgment on his enemies. The mercy of a covenant God is not of a kind which excludes, but necessarily supposes his vengeance against sin. 'Behold the goodness and the severity of God.'

Ver. 3—5. Judgments are here threatened against Damascus and the people of Syria, whose capital city it was. The expression, 'three transgressions, and four,' throughout this prophecy, signifies multiplied sins. There is one offence noticed as the special occasion of God's judgments, the perpetration of signal cruelty against the Gileadites, whose country bordered on that of Syria. The conquest and captivity of the Syrians here foretold is recorded in 2 Kings xvi. 9.

Ver. 6—10. A righteous retribution is here denounced against the Philistines, and the people of Tyre. The transgression singled out is the same in the case of both, delivering the captive Israelites into the hands of the Edomites, who, they knew, would treat them with unrelenting severity; aggravated in the latter case by the brotherly covenant esta-

blished between Tyre and Israel in the days of Hiram and David. The Jews under Hezekiah, and other nations, were made instrumental in bringing the national existence of the Philistines to an end, and Tyre, whose 'merchants were princes,' was utterly destroyed, successively by the arms of Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander the Great.

Ver. 11—15. The Edomites, the posterity of Esau, and the Ammonites, one of the branches of the children of Lot, are threatened for their inhuman and relentless cruelty towards Israel, on whose borders both nations dwelt. The scriptures mark the implacable rage of Edom against their kinsmen, the children of Israel, at different periods of their history. The righteous retribution, here and in other passages, denounced against both has been signally fulfilled. Edom, once 'blessed with the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven from above,' is now 'a desolate wilderness.' Ammon, once fertile and populous, has 'perished out of the countries,' and Rabbah its chief city is 'a stable for camels, and a couching place for flocks.'

By these predictions we are forcibly taught the malignant nature of covetousness. A desire to 'enlarge their border' appears to have been the moving cause of those enormities on the part of the enemies of Israel of which we find the righteous judge thus taking account. Covetousness not only, in common with every inordinate affection, leads to the commission of other sins, but particularly steeleth the heart against the common feelings of humanity. Let the history of Judas in both views show its accursed fruits.

This passage teaches us farther the doctrine of national responsibility. We see the people and their rulers alike threatened with the vengeance which their national capacity and their enmity to God's people had provoked. The word on the great principle that profane, is a commentary on the separate existence only in nations, having their corporal retribution in divine this world, receive a temporal retribution in their public character, providence corresponding to the conduct of the church and especially their conduct towards the nation and kingdom cause of the Redeemer. 'The nations that will not serve thee shall perish.' 'Yea, those nations that will not serve thee shall be utterly wasted.'

Yet, even in regard to nations, he is long-suffering and slow to anger. It was for 'three transgressions, and for four,' that is, for obstinate and pronounced wickedness that these judgments were denounced. Thus the reason of the delay in giving possession of the promised land, was that 'the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full.' Let us not then presume on our national prosperity as a certain token of the divine approbation, lest 'despising the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering,' we should only prove to have treasured up to serve ourselves wrath against the day of wrath.' Christ

PRAYER.

O thou everlasting and unchangeable Sovereign, who rulest in the heavens, and on the earth, and doest whatsoever seemeth thee good; thou art to be adored, and loved, and served,

for thou art supremely excellent in thyself, and thy government is directed by unerring wisdom, and perfect rectitude, and boundless goodness. Thou dwellest in Zion, and art there seated on a throne of grace, dispensing blessings to thy humble and believing people. We would desire, as a family, on this morning of a new day, to come to thee with the voice of praise and prayer. O let us partake of the satisfying provision of Zion, and as Zion's children make us joyful in thee our gracious King. Thou hast made reconciliation for iniquity by the death and obedience of thy Son. Thou art very good and merciful to all who come unto thee by Christ. Let us taste of thy grace. O save us by the mighty power of thy Spirit. Thou art terrible, O righteous Father, in thy vengeance against the workers of iniquity. Even out of Zion wilt thou roar against thine enemies. Preserve us from turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and bringing upon ourselves swift destruction. Let us delight to obey thy holy precepts, with fear and trembling may we work out our salvation from the power of sin. We are now about to mingle anew in an evil world. We go forth trusting in thee. O Lord, enable us faithfully to perform its duties, and stedfastly to resist its wickedness. Let us not love the world, nor any evil thing that is in the world. Save us especially from the power of covetousness. Grant us in all our dealings with our fellow-men, a spirit of equity, and meekness, and forbearance, and love, that not by our lips only, but in our lives, we may adorn Christ's doctrine, and show forth his praise. We praise thee for thy distinguished kindness to us as a nation, that in so great a degree we have been exempted from the outward messengers of thy wrath, from the ills of famine, and pestilence, and the sword, especially that thou hast established thy testimony and thy law in the midst of us, and that from the fathers to the children, the message of thy grace is made known. We acknowledge our unfaithfulness, and our many backslidings. We confess that we have even deserved to perish with the nations and kingdoms that have opposed Christ. O grant us, universally, the spirit of repentance and fidelity to thee. Let our earthly sovereign rule in thy fear. Let all who are in authority over us be subject unto the Lord Jesus Christ, that we, under them, may lead quiet, and peaceable, and godly lives, and that glory may dwell in our land. We pray that the kingdom of Christ may speedily extend to all lands. Let all the kings fall down before Messiah, and let all nations serve him; and to thee, O Father,

and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, be ascribed the glory, the dominion, and the power, now and for ever. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXV. 6.

SCRIPTURE—1 JOHN II.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—6. The great design of God's word, and of the gospel of Christ, in particular, is that men 'sin not.' Yet if those who are seeking to obey the gospel fall into sin, as 'there is no man who liveth and sinneth not,' it does not leave them to despair, but invites them anew to resort to the satisfying righteousness and prevailing advocacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. The tendency of this is not to encourage sin, but truly the reverse, and it is the neglect of Christ's peace-speaking blood, and his saving offices, to which every instance of continued backsliding is to be traced. Would we ascertain then that we truly know Christ, and are abiding in him, let us simply ask, Are we keeping Christ's commandments? are we walking as he walked?

Ver. 7—11. Neither our Lord himself, nor his apostles, addressed to Christians any moral precept which was absolutely new. The gospel, however, more expressly and more powerfully enforces the law of love than the old dispensation did. Each of the ten commandments, given from Sinai, was indeed only a particular application of this one great commandment. The gospel, however, plainly exhibits the love of God, and of man, as the sum of all holiness, and furnishes the most powerful motive to the cultivation of holy love in the example of Christ's unspeakable love to ourselves. Do we cherish hatred towards a single fellow-being, even our greatest enemy? It is enough to prove us strangers to the saving power of the gospel, not less than to the mind that was in Christ.

Ver. 12—14. The apostle addresses himself to the Christian experience of believers according to their several circumstances and stages of advancement in the divine life, that from a sense of what God has already wrought for each of them personally, they may be stirred up to a right improvement of his exhortations. Are we only as little children, beginning our Christian course, having recently begun to taste the blessedness of a pardoned state, and of knowing God as our reconciled 'Father?' or as young men have we made some progress in the faith, having withstood the fiery trials of the world? or are we fathers in the church of God, having long been growing in knowledge of the mystery of Christ as the life and comfort of our souls? In each case we have strong and peculiar inducements to give ear to the lessons of heavenly truth, that we may enjoy increasing experience of the blessedness which it offers, and to a measure of which we have already attained.

Ver. 15—17. The apostle warns us against the love of the world, meaning by this apparently not the world as created by God, which we are only forbidden to love inordinately, but the world as distinguished from the church, the evil world, the friendship of which is enmity with God. 'All that is in the world,' the principles by which it is governed, are evil and ungodly, whether the lust of the flesh, seeking the indulgence of the appetites, the lust of the eyes directed to the unbounded accumulation of wealth, or the pride of life, ever thirsting for the vain aggrandizement of the world; and what is there 'in the world' to entice our hearts from God? These passions and the objects which gratify them, must alike utterly fade and perish, and leave their votaries in helpless and endless destitution. Be it thine, O my soul, to love God, and to do his will, that when my flesh and my heart, together with every earthly good, shall fail, he may be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Ver. 18—29. The present epistle was written towards the close of the Jewish commonwealth, when Jesus had foretold that many false teachers should arise. As they had heard that one grand antichristian delusion should appear before the end of time, the apostle calls them to observe that even at the present great crisis of the history of the church, only second in importance to that, there were many antichrists. The term, both in its special and more general meaning, is applied to a false teacher arising out of the church itself, or professing the Christian name, and yet craftily subverting the saving doctrines of the gospel. In the times on which our lot has fallen, we have special need to seek an unction from the Holy One, that we may be kept from the wiles of antichristian deceivers. Let us not forget that one mark by which it is ever profitable to be proving our steadfastness in the faith of Jesus: 'If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.'

PRAYER.

We desire again, O Almighty Father, to come into thy most holy presence, and to spread before thee our returning wants. Let our prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. We have, anew, to profess our short-comings and our offences. Our own hearts condemn us, and thou art greater than our hearts. How much more then are we condemned in thy pure sight? We feel our constant need to have recourse to that fountain which thou hast opened for sin and for uncleanness. Forgive, for Jesus' sake, whatever thou hast seen amiss in our temper and conduct during the past day. Speak peace to our souls by the blood of Jesus. Wash us from all our filthiness, and let us lie down in such a frame of mind that should we never wake again in this world, we may be meet for waking in thy presence, and beholding thy face in righteousness. If thou

shalt be pleased to spare us to a new day, suffer us not to turn again unto folly. Enable us to value the lengthening out of our days only that we may grow in grace, and finish thy work. Cause us, O Lord, to grow in holy love. Deliver us from the power of all selfish passions, and let us walk towards all men after the example of Christ's unspeakable love to us. Save us from the love of this present evil world. Teach us the insufficiency of every worldly joy, and the ungodliness of every worldly lust, that when the world and the lust thereof shall have passed away, we may find an abiding portion in thy favour. O save us from the wiles of antichristian deceivers. Grant us an unction from the Holy One, that we may know the truth and cleave to it, and that, abiding in thy holy truth, we may abide in the Son and in the Father. We would bear the necessities of our brethren on our spirits at thy footstool. Be the friend of our friends. Reward our benefactors. Forgive our enemies if we have any, and grant us hearts also to forgive them, as we seek forgiveness from thee. Do good unto them that are good. Pity and reclaim all who are out of the way. Have compassion on the multitudes who are sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. Let all nations be blessed in Jesus, and let all nations call him blessed. Pour out thy Spirit abundantly on the parish and congregation to which we belong. Give increasing wisdom, and fidelity, and strength to thy servant who is over us in the Lord, and and to all who are called to labour in thy work. Prosper them greatly in their faithful labours, and let the souls of thine elect be speedily gathered in, and the praise and the glory shall be thine own, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XCII. 7—10.

SCRIPTURE—AMOS IV.

REMARKS.

'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' Lamentable evidence of this truth is contained in the present chapter. The wickedness of the people of Israel appears in the prevalence of oppression. Ver. 1—3. Proud and wanton, like the unruly kine that fed on Bashan, they cruelly oppressed the poor and crushed the weak. But the cry of the needy, though unheard by man, came up before God; and with an oath sanctioned by His holiness, he declares that their wrongs shall be requited. Let those whom providence has entrusted with power over their fellow-

creatures, remember that God, who is no respecter of persons, will visit inhumanity and injustice with righteous retribution. Ver. 4, 5. There is poignant irony in these words, emphatically expressing the divine displeasure. The depravity of the heart is only equalled by its deceitfulness. While Israel perpetrated these enormities, they sought, by the number and costliness of their sacrifices, to quiet the conscience and to propitiate God. Let us beware of that artifice by which Satan would lead us to repose in formal services, as a substitute for duties neglected and as a peace-offering for sins committed. Often has the arrow of conviction been thus loaded, and spiritual apathy induced. The children of the light may here learn a lesson from the children of this world. Do not the liberal gifts of the latter, upon the shrine of an unworthy object, speak reproach to Christians who grudge a scanty portion of their substance to the true service of God?

Ver. 6—11. It indicates a reprobate mind when severe and successive judgments fail to humble and correct; when again and again, God is constrained to say, 'Yet have ye not returned unto me.' The famine and the sword had been employed in vain to reclaim abandoned Israel. May the chastenings of the Lord ever be sanctified and improved; for, if despised, they will harden our hearts and aggravate our guilt! They who resist correction, may provoke God to cut them off in their impenitence; or by withdrawing his Holy Spirit, to let them alone. 'Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more.'

Ver. 12, 13. What words can express the folly of resisting the Lord! The God of hosts is his name. Let these sublime discoveries of his almighty power and heart-searching knowledge, which prove that he can neither be deceived nor opposed, persuade the sinner to comply with the invitation, 'Prepare to meet thy God.' Temporal judgments may be impending over us, as over Israel, fraught with desolation. This we know, that the day of the Lord cometh when we must meet him as our judge. He is now ready to meet with us in his ordinances, in his word, at a throne of grace, dispensing pardon, peace and eternal life. In these let us wait upon him in faith and penitence. In conclusion, there is one, and only one way, in which here or hereafter, we can meet him with acceptance. 'Jesus saith, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.' 'And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of waters in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.'

PRAYER.

O Lord God of hosts, we adore thee as almighty, all-wise, and most holy, the maker and preserver of all. Give us grace to worship thee with sincerity and truth, for thou knowest and declarest to man what is his thought. May we be humbled under the affecting record which thy word contains of the deceit and depravity of our hearts. Thy grace alone restrains us from

the excesses which provoked thine anger against thine ancient people. Our presumptuous sins and secret faults might justly have moved thee to visit us with thy judgments, and cast us utterly away. Even in our offerings, and sacrifices, and solemn assemblies, we multiply transgression. Yet, O Lord, in the midst of deserved judgments, thou still rememberest mercy. Thou hast passed by before us, and proclaimed thy name, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. For thy name's sake pardon our iniquities, for they are very great. We plead the unchanging promise of the new covenant, I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Create also within us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Cast us not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from us. May the fruits of that Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, be matured in our hearts, and exhibited in our lives. As thou hast appointed a day in which thou wilt judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom thou hast ordained, may we give all diligence to prepare to meet our God. Increase our faith, and bring us more powerfully and habitually under the influence of things unseen and eternal. The life which we now live in the flesh, may we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. Impress us deeply with the shortness and uncertainty of life; and seeing that all earthly things must soon be dissolved, may we, in all holy conversation and godliness, be looking and preparing for the coming of the day of God. We thank thee for the gifts and mercies of thy providence. How great is the sum of them! if we would count them, they are more than the sand; when we awake we are still with thee. We have laid us down and slept; we have awaked; for the Lord sustained us. Thy mercies and compassions are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness. May goodness and mercy follow us during this day, spreading a table for us in the wilderness, delivering us from dangers and temptations, and strengthening us for all duties. Be the portion of our kindred, and adopt them into that family whose members Christ will own for his brethren. Be the refuge of the afflicted, and may tribulation yield to them the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Bless the church of Christ with peace and prosperity; upon all its members may the Lord command the blessing, even life for evermore. May the dispersed of Israel soon be gathered in;

for thou hast promised to bring thy seed from the east, and to gather them from the west; to say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth. Let thy kingdom come, when all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRaise—PARAPHRASE LXIII.

SCRIPTURE—1 JOHN III.

REMARKS.

The contents of this chapter may be comprehended under three heads, viz. the exalted privilege of believers as the sons of God; the evidences of that filial relation, arising from a holy life and love to the brethren; and the blessed result of assurance toward God.

Ver. 1, 2. Astonishing condescension! love passing knowledge! that the children of disobedience and wrath, rebels against God, and covered with moral pollution, should be received into an alliance so exalted and endearing. Yet this honour have all the saints. Nor let their gratitude and joy be abated because an unconverted world neither know nor value this privilege. This might only be expected, since God's eternal Son came into the world and it knew him not. We may be poor, unknown, despised; but now are we the sons of God. Even in this life are we partakers of a divine nature and image, blessed with the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father, and invested with an inalienable title to the inheritance of sons. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived the full blessedness of this inheritance. But this we know, that the glorious moral image of God, lost at the fall, and now but partially restored, shall then be perfected, and shine with undimmed lustre. Mark the cause of this complete conformity, 'We shall see him as he is.' Even here, beholding as in a glass darkly the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory; and that transformation shall be perfected when faith is changed into sight. What are the marks, O my soul, by which thou mayest know that this exalted privilege is thine? The apostle proceeds to state them from the 3d to the 10th verse. These are clear marks: may they be clearly inscribed on our character and life.

Ver. 11—18. As the first and great command is supreme love to God, the second is like unto it, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;' and the latter branch of the law, the apostle now enforces by various motives. What a fearful proof of the effects of malice is presented in Cain, who, stung by envy, slew his brother; a bloody beacon to all ages of the

crimes to which hatred may hurry us, and an example of the enmity which ever actuates the seed of the serpent. It is an appalling thought, that in the eye of him who seeth not as man seeth, harboured malice is murder in the heart, 'Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.' Ye who deem resentment essential to honourable character, and are quick to sacrifice your own or another's life upon the altar of revenge, what claim have you to be called the sons of God? The usages of man, however sanctioned, cannot alter the holy and eternal law of God. On the contrary, if we at all appreciate the love of Christ in laying down his life for us, or regard him as our great example, we shall acquiesce in the apostle's statement, that 'we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' But if mutual love ought to reach this high devotedness, how far do they come short who shut their sympathies against the destitute, and who substitute empty expressions for the deeds of Christian kindness.

Ver. 19—24. Where these precious evidences exist, they bring with them their own reward. 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before God.' If conscience testify against us, let us not expect to impose on him who knows our state of heart more thoroughly than we can do. 'Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.' But if, amidst confessed and lamented infirmities, conscience, enlightened and unbiassed, shall bear testimony to these evidences in us, we shall enjoy a humble yet undoubting confidence toward God. 'Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in mine integrity.' One happy effect will be filial assurance in our pleadings at a throne of grace. To keep his commandments indeed, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight, can never form our plea for favour; but they evince a reconciled state, in which the Father of lights will deny us no good gift. To believe in Christ and to love the brethren, are here presented as the sum of the divine commandments. Happy they, who by the spirit and dispositions graciously given to them, possess assured evidence that they truly have fellowship with God, and that he resides in them as his chosen temples!

PRAYER.

O righteous and eternal God! in thy free and sovereign grace receive us as thy children, and impart to us a filial spirit, that with all liberty we may have access to thee as our Father in heaven. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hast predestinated us unto the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of thy will. Everlasting praise be unto thee, O Saviour, who givest power to such as believe on thy name to become the sons of God. And we magnify thee, O divine and most gracious Spirit, who by thine inhabitation bearest witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Adored be thy name that we, who were the children of disobedience and wrath,

have been translated into thy family and become heirs of glory. Make us sensible that we were by nature even as others, guilty and polluted, and that all our privileges and prospects redound to the praise of the glory of thy grace, wherein thou hast made us accepted in the Beloved. May the hope set before us exert a hallowed and purifying influence upon our souls, transforming us more and more into the holy and beautiful image of Jesus. Enable us to abide in him, and then shall we glorify thee our Father, by bringing forth much fruit unto righteousness. The Lord make us to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men. Of the abundance with which thou blessest us, make us willing to communicate to the wants of others; imbue us deeply with that love which moved the Redeemer to lay down his life for us. Seal us with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. Preserve us, O God, from temptations, corruption, and grievous sins which wound the conscience, lest we grieve thy Holy Spirit. We thy children are weak, dependent, and ignorant; O our Father instruct, protect, and provide for us. Chasten us for our profit, that we may be partakers of thy holiness; and let us not despise thy chastenings, nor faint when we are rebuked of thee. We pray that the heathen and all families of the earth may soon know and call upon thy name, and that all kindreds of the nations may worship before thee as a reconciled Father. May the country to which we belong be a land wherein dwelleth righteousness. Unite our relatives to thyself as thy children by adoption. May the afflicted know that thou chastenest because thou lovest them, and thus possess their souls in patience. In thy pity, O Father, forgive the sins of this day, and make us grateful for its mercies. Keep us this night, for thou neither slumberest nor sleepest; and let our sleep be sweet and refreshing. If the Lord will, may we awake in health and peace, to devote our preserved lives to his service. Let our prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE X. 3—7.

SCRIPTURE—AMOS V.

REMARKS.

So slow are we of heart to believe what God reveals, that precept must be upon precept, and line upon line. The house of Israel is again called upon to hear a message from the Lord, similar to that addressed to them in the preceding chapter. As the things written aforetime were written for our learning, let us meditate upon these verses with faithful self-application.

Ver. 1. The sins of Israel are asserted, and set before them. Idolatry had supplanted the pure worship of the true God. Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba, places famed in Israel's history, were now desecrated with strange gods and rites. Equal justice was perverted, for they turned judgment to wormwood, and righteousness was left off. The poor were oppressed by fraud and extortion at the very gate where justice was professedly administered. Faithful reproof from the word, or the messengers of God, was abhorred in these evil times; till the prudent kept silence, finding it both dangerous and fruitless to lift their warning testimony. They are charged with multiplied sins; 'I know your manifold transgressions.' And who among us can plead guiltless to the same charge?

Ver. 2. They are forewarned of impending desolations. There is an unfailing connection between sin and misery. Heavy judgments ever follow great degeneracy or corruption, whether national or individual. The sword was soon to desolate the land, till only a tenth part of its inhabitants should be left in Israel. The ruthless hand of rapine, armed to execute the divine vengeance, would despoil Gilgal and Bethel, which had been enriched with so many costly offerings. The stranger would destroy or occupy the stately dwellings which they had raised, and eat the fruit of the vineyards which they had planted. The anger of God, like a consuming fire, would scathe and devour the entire house of Joseph. The voice of lamentation and wailing would be heard through the land. Let these terrible calamities which the sins of Israel provoked, remind us of the woes which await the finally impenitent.

Ver. 3. God declares that he would not accept the show and form of devotion which they maintained, while they lived in the practice of flagrant iniquity. Their festivals, sacrifices, and solemn assemblies were hateful in his sight, as hypocrisy ever must be to him upon whom the most artful semblance cannot impose, and whose claim upon every worshipper is, 'My son, give me thy heart.' During many years of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness, their sacrifices and offerings were interrupted and omitted; but as this arose from necessary causes, no censure was attached. Hence follow two important truths. When by the restraints of providence the external services of religion cannot be observed, no blame will be imputed; the aged or infirm, debarred from the sanctuary and table of the Lord,

may in their solitude hold communion with an ever-present God, and be accepted. On the other hand, we may stately frequent the place of prayer, and punctually honour all his ordinances; but if, like Israel, we regard iniquity in our hearts, and stain our hands with sin, our sacrifice is an abomination in his sight. Beware, O my soul, lest perfunctory services secretly supplant the power and practice of godliness.

Ver. 4. They are repeatedly exhorted in this chapter to seek the Lord. The idols whom they had served were lying vanities, which could neither satisfy nor save the worshipper. If we have forsaken our own mercies, and idolatrously made the creature our portion and our God, let us henceforth seek the Lord, inquiring into his will, and supplicating his favour. He who established, and sustains the ordinances of nature can alone avert the judgments which sin provokes. Hating the evil, and loving the good, let us cultivate that integrity which is here commended to Israel. Then may we humbly plead his own promise, 'Ye shall live.'

PRAYER.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts! the whole earth is full of thy glory. Wherewith shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the high God? If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Thou knowest our manifold iniquities and grievous sins; they are more than the hairs of our head; they have been done against clear light, against many mercies, and against the motions and strivings of thy Holy Spirit. We have sinfully given that glory to the creature which was due to thee, the ever-blessed Creator. We have not done justly, nor loved mercy, nor walked humbly with our God. If thou hadst laid judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, we had been found altogether perverse. O most merciful God, no sacrifices which we can offer, can atone for sin; enable us to look with faith and penitence to the great sacrifice once offered upon the cross, even Jesus. We bless thee that when thou hadst no pleasure in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, he said, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. May he be made of thee unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Encouraged by thy gracious invitations, we desire to seek thee in the way appointed in thy word. While we seek thee in prayer, be thou found of us. Fulfil unto us thy promise, Ye shall live. Begin in each of us thy good work, and carry it forward unto perfection. Let our minds be filled with spiritual light, and our whole souls with zeal for thy glory. Fulfil in us all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power. Animated by promises, may we give all diligence to adorn the doctrine of our God and Saviour, by adding to

our faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity; for if these things be in us, and abound, they make us that we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for the spread and enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom. May every valley soon be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low, and the crooked made straight, and the rough places made plain. Let thy glory, O Lord, be revealed, and all flesh see it together. We would bear on our spirits before thee, the interests of those to whom we are united by any of the ties of thy providence; enrich them with thy favour, which is life, and with thy loving-kindness, which is better than life; let none of them be wanting when thou makest up thy jewels. Visit, in compassion, the sons and daughters of affliction. According as their day is, such may their strength be. Impart consolation to those who are mourning over the bereavements which death occasions, and enable them to bow before thy holy will. Accept our thanksgiving for the mercies of the past night, and this morning. During this day we commend us to thee, and to the word of thy grace, which is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance with them that are sanctified. And all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XLIX. 12—14.

SCRIPTURE—1 JOHN IV.

REMARKS.

Before he left the earth, our Lord thus warned his disciples: 'There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect; behold, I have told you before.' Ere long the need of this faithful caution became apparent; corrupt teachers and doctrines soon arose, and made havoc in his church. Hence the apostle opens this chapter with the affectionate solemn counsel: 'Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.' As dangerous errors and seducers from the truth still exist, let us attentively mark how they may be known.

To distinguish the spirits, we are directed to try their doctrines by the infallible word of God. 'To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' Especially we are taught, ver. 2, 3, that every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; and that every spirit not con-

fessing this, is not of God, but of antichrist. The divinity of Christ and his incarnation to atone for sin, which are implied in this confession, form the capital pillars of the Christian faith. Where these, with the other truths inseparably connected with them, are maintained, we may infer that the doctrine is of God; where they are denied, the system, however plausible, is of antichrist. So repugnant are the doctrines of the cross to the depraved taste of the natural man, and so grateful are the false doctrines which the great seducer suggests, that our preservation in the truth is ascribed to the interposing power of God. 'Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.' These things are hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. Spirit of truth! give us renewed hearts, and humble, teachable minds, that we may receive the kingdom of God as little children.

The apostle supplies another test. These false spirits are of the world, speak of it, and are welcomed by it. The doctrine which indulges the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, meets a cordial reception in the carnal mind. On the other hand, the doctrines of Christ crucified, staining the glory of man, and enforcing purity of heart, bear the signature of their holy and glorious Author. The opposition which they have experienced might have been expected; that they have ever prevailed, or been received, is a proof that the power of God was with them, honouring them as his own.

With these cautions the apostle returns to his favourite theme. He had leaned upon the bosom of Jesus, and largely imbibed his Spirit of love. He commends mutual affection from its heavenly origin. 'Love is of God;' from its indication of a heavenly disposition, 'every one that loveth is born of God;' and from the amazing manifestation of God's love to us. There is peculiar emphasis in the expression, 'Herein is love.' As the stars, bright though they be, disappear when the sun comes forth, so do the other gifts of God's goodness, however great, appear as nothing when we contemplate this unspeakable display of his love in Christ Jesus. Whether we consider the ineffable love which the Father bore to his only begotten Son, or the deep humiliation and anguish of soul and body which Jesus endured, or the polluted and rebellious character of those whom, with his own consent, he was sent to save, or the generous freeness with which he gave him; we must feel that love like this wants an ane, and passeth knowledge. What more constraining motive can be conceived to commend mutual love? 'Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another.' God is invisible; but believers are his visible, though imperfect, representations; let the image of God in them attach us to them. Mutual love is thus its own reward, because imparting sweet assurance of our union to God, and communion with him.

PRAYER.

We bless thee, O thou high and holy One who inhabitest eternity, whose name is Holy, that though thou dwellest in the high and holy place, thou dwellest with him also that is of a contrite

and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and the heart of the contrite ones. For this spirit of humility and contrition we earnestly pray. Open our eyes that we may discern the spirituality of thy law, that we may die to self-righteousness. Pour out upon us a spirit of grace and of supplication, that looking upon him whom we have pierced, we may mourn as one mourneth for an only son, and be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first born. Give us that godly sorrow for sin which worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of. While we mourn over our ingratitude and sinfulness, may thy Spirit enable us to apprehend thy mercy in Christ Jesus. We rejoice to know that in him thou art a just God, and yet a Saviour, and that it is consistent with thy holiness, and conducive to thy glory, freely to dispense that mercy which we need. Adored be thy name, that mercy and truth have met together, that righteousness and peace have kissed each other. We magnify and praise thee for the amazing manifestation of thy love in the gift of thine only begotten Son. Herein is love, not that we loved thee, but that thou lovedst us, and sentest thy Son to be the propitiation for our sins. May we love thee, because thou first lovedst us. And as thou hast so loved us, may we, O Lord, love one another with a pure heart fervently. Blot out, as a thick cloud, our transgressions, and as a cloud, our sins. May thy grace, that bringeth salvation, teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. We pray for the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom throughout the world. May the time, even the set time, to favour Zion, soon arrive. In this neighbourhood, in all parts of our native land, and throughout the habitable earth, may the joyful sound of the gospel be heard; and let it come not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power. We acknowledge with gratitude the goodness and mercy which have attended us during the past day and week. We commend our bodies and spirits to thy guardian care, during the hours of silence and of darkness. Prepare us, and all the household of faith, for the services and privileges of the approaching sabbath. In every tabernacle may there be the voice of joy and health; and on every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and on all her assemblies, may the

Lord create a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; and upon all the glory let there be a defence. Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

FORTY-NINTH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXVI. I.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CXXXVI.

REMARKS.

This psalm bears a striking resemblance to the one immediately preceding it, with this difference, that it is what is called a responsive song, the first part of the verse being sung by the Levites, and the second, or what may be termed the burden, by the people. It is supposed to have been written after the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, and is in itself a noble hymn of thanksgiving, as comprehensive as it is sublime. If we implore the influence of that Spirit who dictated it, and thus have our hearts sanctified and prepared to feel its import, then with something like the inspired poet's enthusiasm, we shall contemplate the great object of his adoration, and with becoming reverence celebrate the power and providence of that Being whose sovereignty is absolute, whose kingdom ruleth over all, and whose 'mercy endureth for ever.' The Psalmist first views Jehovah as the 'God of gods, and the Lord of lords,' supreme and independent, doing according to his will throughout the extent of his vast dominions; for all this excellence is implied in the titles here given to him, and yet 'his mercy endureth for ever.' He 'doeth wonders' wherever his eye reaches, or his arm is stretched out; but especially was his might displayed, and his wisdom manifested in the creation of the heavens and their hosts, and of the earth and its fullness, 'for his mercy endureth for ever.' The sun, the centre of unnumbered worlds, to which he imparts light, life, and fertility; irradiating nature, and diffusing health and joy with his beams: the moon, in silent grandeur, pursuing his course through the sky, and the stars that rejoice along with her in the Creator's omnipotence, are objects which cannot fail to produce a strong impression on every rational being, whatever may be the individual's ignorance of that science which has enlarged so incalculably the astronomer's acquaintance with the operations of him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. But how must even these stupendous effects of almighty agency be diminished in their splendour to our conceptions, when we compare them with the God who is their origin and end, who dwells in uncreated light because the effulgence of himself, and in whose

presence angels and archangels veil themselves, and yet 'his mercy endureth for ever.' The Psalmist next reviews, and gratefully acknowledges, the Lord's goodness in the deliverances which he wrought out for his chosen people, when he destroyed the first-born of their Egyptian oppressors; when he divided the Red sea, that his ransomed might pass over; when he overwhelmed their implacable enemies in the returning waves, and made them sink as lead in the mighty waters; when he guided them through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night; when he subdued powerful kings before them, and gave their lands to the seed of Israel his servant; when he brought them in safety to their promised possession, and settled them there, till by their sins they provoked him to give them into the hands of the Chaldeans; and the period of their appointed captivity being now come to a close, when he remembered them in their low estate, and restored them again to their own beloved Jerusalem, 'for his mercy endureth for ever.' These works of mercy, as astonishing as they were gratuitously performed, were done for a certain specified portion of his intelligent creatures; but we should reflect, that in even a higher sense he has been as mindful of us, to whom, on account of our sins, there remained only a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation to devour the adversaries. He remembered us also in our low estate; and delivered us through the mediation of his beloved Son. 'O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.'

PRAYER.

On this another sabbath morning, would we desire, with feelings becoming our situation, to approach thy throne, O thou who art the God of heaven, and whose mercy endureth for ever, earnestly imploring thy gracious presence, and the answer of our petitions, through him whom thou hearest always, and in whom thou art ever well pleased. We adore thee as that eternal, self-existent, and omnipotent Being who didst create the heavens and the earth, who didst set a tabernacle for the sun, and hast ordained the moon and the stars. Thou art continually doing wonders, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works. Thou didst remember thy covenant with Abraham thy servant, and in thy faithfulness didst bring his seed, when thou sawest their affliction, and hearest their cry because of their taskmasters, from the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. In the greatness of thy excellency thou didst overthrow them that rose up against thee and thy chosen. In thy mercy thou didst lead forth the people which thou hadst redeemed. Thou didst guide them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. Thou didst bring them in and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance; in the place, O Lord, which thou hadst made for thee to dwell

in ; in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands had established. And when in utter forgetfulness of the marvellous things which thou hadst done for them, their posterity sinned with their fathers, and committed iniquity, and did wickedly ; and thou in thy righteous displeasure hadst delivered them over to their enemies, who carried them away captives to Babylon, thou didst think on them in their low estate, and turn again their captivity as streams in the south. In thy dealings with thy people of old, would we desire to behold thy dealings with us, who also have forsaken the Lord and lightly esteemed the Rock of our salvation. Thou hast rescued us from a far more wretched and galling than Egyptian slavery ; from the thralldom of sin, from the tyranny of Satan, from the power of the grave, and from the second death. All these wonders thou hast performed for us by the voluntary humiliation, sufferings, and crucifixion of thy only begotten Son, the brightness of thy glory, and the express image of thy person ; and through the effectual application to our souls, of the redemption purchased by the Lord our righteousness, by the Spirit of holiness, one with thee, and the eternal Word, God over all, blessed for ever. May we then, O Lord, be filled this morning with that peace which passeth understanding, when we think on thy preserving goodness ; and especially when we dwell on the love in Jesus wherewith thou hast loved us, and in the exercise of our lost affections, purified by the Sanctifier, and set on things above, may we go to thy house of prayer, engage in the solemnities of the sanctuary, and hear for eternity. Let thy presence be with thy servant who is to lead our devotions, and to instruct us in what thou requirest of us ; so that he who soweth, and they who reap, may rejoice together. Graciously hear us, O Lord, in these our humble supplications, and when thou hearest, forgive and answer, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXVII. OF CXXXVIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CXXXVII. CXXXVIII.

REMARKS.

PSALM CXXXVII. The place where, and the occasion on which, this psalm was written, are evident from the composition itself ; but the writer is unknown. The Jews were now in captivity, far from the country which they loved so well, and from the temple where they had worshipped the only living

and true God. This pathetic psalm has two parts: 1. The complaint of the Israelitish exiles ; and never was complaint expressed in language more tender and affecting ; and, 2. A prophetic denunciation of the doom which awaited their idolatrous and cruel oppressors. The first subject of their mournful reflection is the scene of their banishment, and the continuance of their misery. It was by the rivers of *Babylon*, that they *sat down* and wept, when they thought on far distant Zion. They were among proud and insulting enemies, who laughed at their tears ; and they knew that many years of servitude must pass away before the eyes of their children—for before then their own eyes would be closed in death—should again behold the city of their God, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth. Such was the intensity of their grief, that the harps on which they had celebrated the praises of Jehovah, as their covenanted God and King in Jeshurun, had been hung on the willows ; and to complete their wretchedness, the very men who had carried them away captive and wasted them, insulted them in their sorrows, by requiring of them not only a song, but mirth ; asking them, with a sneer, to sing for their amusement one of the songs of Zion. How touching the answer of the captives to this inhuman mockery, and how worthy of the people whose God was the Lord ! ‘How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land !’ And then in the full recollection of what they had been, compared with what they were, they exclaim, in all the anguish of their bursting hearts, and with all the fervour of their reawakened piety, and with all their devotedness of affection to the religious institutions and civil privileges of their country, If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning, its skill in touching the harp. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, never again to swell the hymn of praise ; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

The remaining part of the psalm is, as already intimated, a prophetic declaration of the fate of the church's enemies ; for it is in this light, and not in that of vindictive imprecation, it should be viewed. 1. Of Edom. Thou wilt remember, O Lord, the children of Edom ; and how they treated thy people when thy anger, on account of their sins, was kindled against them ; and how they added to our affliction, when in the day of Jerusalem's visitation and fall, they shouted in the fury of their vengeance, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation. 2. Of Babylon ; that the cup of the Lord's indignation, which he had in justice put into the hands of his own chosen ones, should, after it had passed from them, be put into the hands of their destroyers, who must drain it to the dregs ; nay, the very dregs themselves they must wring them out and drink them. Such was the prediction, and it was fearfully accomplished. Babylon at the appointed time became, and still continues to be, ruinous heaps.

PSALM CXXXVIII. This psalm, as its title bears, is the composition of David ; and is thought to have been written, as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, when having been delivered from all his enemies, he was firmly and peaceably seated on the throne of

Israel. In ver. 1—3, the royal prophet, on reviewing the Lord's gracious interpositions in his behalf, promises a return of gratitude, and of heart-felt praise for all the goodness which God had made to follow him. In ver. 4—6, he speaks of gospel times, when kings would be the nursing-fathers of the church; and in the two last verses, he professes his believing and sanctified confidence in God, shows what he, in the exercise of a lively faith, expects to receive from One who had loved him with an everlasting love; and in the assurance, that he who had begun the good work in him, would perfect that which concerned him, he concludes by earnestly imploring the Lord his protector, guide, and comforter, never to leave him nor forsake him.

PRAYER.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. We give thee thanks for all the blessings of the past day, and that thou hast in abundant mercy allowed another sabbath to close around us in peace. We bless thee, O thou God of ordinances, that we have been permitted to appear in thy courts, to join with the congregation of saints in the songs of praise, and to hear instruction from that word, which is one of the chief instruments thy Spirit employs for making sinners wise unto salvation. We confess, O Lord, the wanderings of our hearts, and the coldness of our affections, even when engaged in the solemn duties of the sanctuary. We would feel, O thou who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, that our sins are too often increased and aggravated by the very means which we use to obtain the forgiveness of them. Revive thy work, O God, in the midst of the years, and in the midst of us; in the midst of the years, and in the midst of us, make known thy grace and thy truth; in deserved wrath, remember and exercise utterly undeserved mercy. But while we are in the undisturbed possession of the freely bestowed and precious privileges of the gospel, we would bear on our minds the state of thy visible church in the days of old; when the enemy entered the city of thy people's solemnities; when the heathen came into thine inheritance; when they defiled thy holy temple, and laid Jerusalem on heaps. And we would fear, O Lord, lest we by our lukewarmness, our indifference, and our sins, should provoke thee, though judgment is thy strange work, to remove our candlestick out of its place, and leave us in the deepest spiritual darkness. We would tremble, O Lord, lest thou shouldst withdraw for ever the light of thy countenance from us, because we have dealt deceitfully in thy covenant, and have not known the day of our merciful visitation. O in thy loving-kindnesses, which have been of old for

ever, forbid that we should be compelled to hang our harps on the willows, and weep when we remember Zion. And whatever may be the trials by which thou art to prove the faith and patience of the saints, may we rest with assured confidence on thy promise, that thou wilt bring thy church in safety through all her difficulties and dangers, and compass her, and all who pray for her prosperity and peace, with songs of deliverance. To encourage us in our exertions for the good of Jerusalem, lead us, O Lord, with thy servant the sweet singer of Israel, to meditate on thy former doings in our behalf; to look forward in faith to the period when the interests of the Redeemer shall be the interests of every one whom the Redeemer has exalted in the earth; and when in the well-grounded belief that we and our land are once more married to the Lord, the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of peace, quietness and assurance for ever. Influenced by these desires, and animated by such hopes, we would commit ourselves to rest this night, praying that we may be satisfied early on another morning with thy mercy; and that all our days we may rejoice and be glad in thee. May the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in thy sight, through Jesus our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXX. 1.

SCRIPTURE—AMOS IX.

REMARKS.

In this chapter we have a confirmation of the prophecy in which the inspired man of God foretells the final ruin of the kingdom of Israel, and the dispersion of its people among all nations. The destruction here predicted was to be complete; and as Jehovah himself, in the exercise of his irresistible power, was the judge who had pronounced the sentence, and pledged his faithfulness to execute it, there could be no hope of escape for the guilty. In language distinguished by the boldest eastern imagery, the Lord, by the mouth of his servant, declares the impossibility of their deliverance from the fate which he had appointed for them. Wherever concealed he would search them out, and exhibit the folly and the hopelessness of man in attempting to hide himself from the eye of omniscience. Nay, even amongst their enemies he would show himself a still more terrible adversary, by commanding the sword of those who might be disposed to pity them, and had sheathed it, to be drawn again, furbished, brandished, and bathed in their blood. The Lord had set his eyes on them for evil, and not

for good, and therefore their very land should be touched by his avenging hand, and turned to desolation and mourning, and at last to silence. He proclaims the means by which he would still farther effect what he had so fearfully threatened, that he is the Director as well as the Creator of the elements of nature, and would make them subservient to his purposes of judgment. He tells them that they must not presume on the astonishing kindness which he had shown towards them in ransoming them from the house of bondage, and bringing them into a land flowing with milk and honey; for thus had he, to a certain extent, acted towards the neighbouring nations who had been their most inveterate enemies. But though scattered and peeled, and obstinate sinners among them irrevocably ordained to the slaughter, still a remnant was to be saved, and a glorious day yet to dawn on the outcasts of Israel. The sun of Israel's day has not appeared above the horizon, but he will arise, and even now there are streaks of light in the eastern sky, announcing that his rising is at hand. The lost sheep shall be sought out and found in every mountain and valley where they strayed, and are straying, and brought back to the fold, from which, reposing on greener grass, and led by stiller waters, they shall wander no more. Messiah, their long-rejected, but then their fully recognised Prince, shall be their shepherd and guide, and guard them for ever.

Most intimately are we concerned in the accomplishment of this cheering prediction; for the apostle declares that he would not that we should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness is in part happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles come in. The universal spread of the gospel is in the divine decree closely connected with the conversion of the Jews; and how anxiously should we pray and labour, that the vail may be taken from their hearts, and that there may soon come out of Zion the Deliverer, who shall turn away ungodliness. The Lord hasten it in his time. Make no tarrying, O my God!

PRAYER.

We will both lay us down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety. Ever blessed be thy name, O thou who keepest Israel, that we have in our experience again realized the humble expectations thus expressed in thy ever-watchful providence. Thou hast made the out-goings of the evening, as well as of the morning, to rejoice over us, and we are still before thee living monuments of thy preserving mercy. Not unto us, O God, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake. We adore thee for the high privilege of having thy holy word still in our hands! May thy Spirit write it on the table of our hearts! We would particularly at this time, desire to profit by the contemplation of thy dispensations to the people whom thou didst choose for thine own, that to them thou mightst reveal thy will, and

manifest thy glory. We would trace thy sovereign goodness in their unspeakable blessings, and thy as sovereign justice in their dreadful punishment. Their sins separated between them and their God, and constrained thee, the Lord of hosts, weary with repenting, to touch their land and it melted, and all that dwelt therein mourned, and it rose up wholly like a flood, and was drowned as by the flood of Egypt. Thine eyes were upon the sinful kingdom; but thou didst not make a full end of the house of Jacob; for thou hadst reserved unto thyself a remnant, according to the election of grace. We know, O God, that it was because of unbelief that they fell, and that we can stand only by faith. Let us not then be high-minded, but fear. Enable us, O Lord, to behold thy goodness and thy severity; on them who fell, severity; but towards us goodness, if we continue in thy goodness, otherwise we also shall be cut off. Our hearts' desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved; and we praise thee, with whom all things are possible, that thou hast ordained that they shall not abide in unbelief, and that thou wilt graff them into the good olive tree again; for this is thy covenant unto them when thou shalt take away their sins. In their behalf, O Lord, we plead thy own promise, that thou wilt arise and have mercy upon Zion, and that the time to favour her, yea, the set time, will assuredly come. He that testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly; even so come, Lord Jesus. And while we thus pray for the conversion and restoration of thine ancient people, we would earnestly supplicate restraining, strengthening, and confirming grace for ourselves. Fulfil in us all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power, that we may enter on the duties of a new day in the sustaining belief that we are under thy gracious protection, and that as thou hast delivered our souls from death, thou wilt also preserve our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. May thy Spirit inspire the resolution, and enable us individually to keep it, I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. Let thy mercy, O Lord, in Christ, be upon us, according as we desire to hope in thee. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXXIV. 5.

SCRIPTURE—1 JOHN V.

REMARKS.

In this chapter the apostle directs our attention to some most important points of Christian doctrine and practice. 1st. He lays it down as an unquestionable position, that whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Messiah, is born of God; because the Spirit has, in the change produced in him at his regeneration, wrought so effectually on his understanding and heart as to enable him to receive Christ in all his offices; and thus to inspire him with that love to God, who hath called him to his kingdom and glory, which necessarily manifests itself in that love to the brethren which is the end of the commandment. Another evidence of the reality of this love, and of the source whence it flows, is, that it uniformly and irresistibly leads to obedience, and makes the believer feel and acknowledge, that whatever may be the trials of his pilgrimage, the doing the will of his Father in heaven is one of the most delightful employments in which the disciple of Jesus can be engaged. The Saviour's yoke, he can declare from his own blessed experience, is easy, and his burden is light.

2. The apostle asserts and illustrates the great truth, that faith in Christ, and it alone, overcometh the world; because the believer, looking beyond the things of sense and of time, keeps his eye steadily fixed on the prize of his high calling. He estimates earthly objects at their real value, and having ascertained it to be less than nothing and vanity, he proceeds on his way Zionward, unseduced by the attractions, and smiling with a noble contempt at the frowns of the world, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, and continuing steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

3. The apostle observes that he who is at once the Object and the Author of this faith, though the Son of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, became incarnate, that he might die the just for the unjust, and by uniting his people to himself, secure their union with the Father, who by his Spirit seals them to the day of redemption. The essential divinity of Jesus was attested by water, the water of baptism, when the Holy Ghost descended like a dove upon him, and a voice from the excellent glory proclaimed, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And by blood, when by his bloody sweat in the garden he showed the unutterable anguish of his soul under the pressure of the divine wrath, which in our stead he was then enduring; and by his atoning death on the cross, when under the hidings of his Father's countenance as our substitute, he exclaimed, 'my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.'

4. The apostle declares that besides the testimony of the three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and the three that bear witness on earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood, the believer has the witness in himself,

the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit, that he is one of the sons of God, and if a son, adopted into the Saviour's family, then an heir, according to the hope of eternal life; an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ.

5. The apostle states the end which he had in view in making the preceding important remarks to the saints in Christ Jesus whom he addressed, that being assured of their personal interest in the great atonement, and through it of being put in possession of their everlasting inheritance, they might pray, Lord, increase our faith, and rest confident that whatever they asked agreeable to the will of God, he would hear them in this very thing, and cause them to know and to feel that they had the petitions which they desired of him.

6. The apostle having pointed out the privileges and the advantages of faith in Christ, gives direction in prayer in reference to the condition of others; that if a believer, by the suggestion of the Spirit, perceives that a Christian brother has committed such a sin as to expose himself to disease which is not necessarily to end in death, but to be cured by the means employed in dependence on the great Physician, then let the disciple of Jesus implore God in behalf of the afflicted; and God, in answer to his petitions, will grant life, health, and strength to the person for whom his supplications have been offered. But if the sin is such as from its very nature to end in death, the apostle does not say, or mean, that any believer should pray for his recovery, because in such circumstances he can have no reason to expect that the Lord would listen to his request.

The apostle concludes with a recapitulation of what he had stated respecting the believer's privileges, that he who is born of God is secured from the wilful commission and condemnatory power of sin; fortified against the assaults of the great adversary of God and man; the good soldier of Jesus Christ in the midst of a world lying in wickedness; enlightened in the knowledge of the true God, and in blessed union with him, and therefore bound to worship and serve him alone in reverence and godly fear, having his conversation habitually in heaven, from whence he looks for the Saviour to come again, and to receive him into his Master's joy.

PRAYER.

O thou God, whose we are, and whom we desire to serve, we adore thee that thou hast once more blessed us with an opportunity of assembling, as a family, in thy presence, for the purpose of singing thy praise, of reading thy word, and pouring out our souls before thee. Sanctify to our spiritual improvement and growth in grace, that portion of holy scripture which has now been brought under our consideration, and from it may we learn wisdom. May we see more clearly the nature, apprehend more distinctly the excellence, and partake more rejoicingly of the triumphs of that saving principle which overcometh the world, and will enable us to pass through it as strangers and pilgrims who look for

a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. It is to thee, O thou triune Jehovah, that we would render our thanksgivings for devising, executing, and completing the scheme of our redemption, and most earnestly do we pray that we may have the witness in ourselves that thou hast given unto us eternal life, and that none shall be able to pluck us out of thy hand. And being placed by thy grace in this blessed state, we would support our hearts with the belief that thou wilt hear us at all times from thy sanctuary, and strengthen us out of Zion. We know, O Lord, that all unrighteousness is sin; we feel our own exceeding sinfulness, and that we can entertain no hopes of pardon but through the sufferings and intercession of him who came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ, and on him therefore would we rely exclusively for wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Perfect in us, we beseech thee, O God of our salvation, the gracious work which thou hast begun, so that through the indwelling influences of thy Spirit, we may not wilfully and deliberately transgress that law which is holy, and just, and good. O may we have indeed been begotten of thee, and in thy might may we keep ourselves from evil, so that the wicked one may be effectually restrained from touching, tempting, and leading us to forget that we are the Lord's. And as we are persuaded that the whole world lieth in wickedness, we would offer up our supplications for all whom thou hast not as yet visited with the day-spring from on high. Show them, O Lord, that thy Son has come to pay the penalty due by the guilty, and to make peace by the blood of his cross. O give them an understanding of their real state and prospects, that through the communications of thy grace they may know experimentally as the only Saviour, him that is true, in whom thou seest no iniquity in Jacob, and no perverseness in Israel. May they be satisfied of his all-sufficiency to redeem, from the conviction which thy Spirit alone can produce in them, that he is the true God, the Prince of life, and the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him. May the arms of thy protection be around us this night, and thus guarded we will fear no evil; and if we shall be permitted to open our eyes on the light of another morning, may our first thoughts be of thee, and of what thou hast done for us; and may it be the firm purpose of our souls to devote ourselves henceforth and for ever to the service of him who is the health of our countenance, and our God. Hear us, O Lord, and answer us, for the Redeemer's sake.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXVII. 7—9.

SCRIPTURE—OBADIAH.

REMARKS.

This sublime vision, in common with the 49th chapter of Jeremiah, of which it is in a great measure a reiteration, and in some parts a transcript, relates chiefly to the destruction of those hereditary enemies of God's ancient people, the Edomites, or descendants of Esau.

The prophet begins by announcing, on the authority of Jehovah, that the doom of the Edomites was already sealed, and a confederacy of nations formed for their destruction. He next describes the desolations which were to precede and attend their downfall. He then turns to the grounds of God's controversy with them, reminding them how richly they merited their doom by their base and unbrotherly hostility to Israel; and especially by the malevolent pleasure with which they had contemplated the captivity to Babylon. And he concludes by assuring his countrymen, that a very different and far more desirable fate awaited the seed of Jacob; that a reversion of precious blessings was yet in store for them; and that the day was not distant when they should not only recover their own land, but also possess the gates of their enemy. As respects diction and style, the prophecy is highly poetical. The greater part is couched in the form of an address to Idumea, which the prophet, in the bold spirit of Eastern poetry, personifies. At the 17th verse, he turns, with a suddenness of transition characteristic of the scriptures, from Idumea, and apostrophizes Israel. In the close, the style of simple narrative is pleasingly resumed.

The vision of Obadiah regarding Edom has received, at least in its literal sense, a complete fulfilment. Within a few years from the date of the prophecy this powerful and opulent kingdom was overrun and subjugated by the same Assyrian conqueror whom it had previously assisted to humble Jerusalem: and though it again, at a subsequent period, recovered its independence—though it again 'builded,' as Malachi expressly predicted, 'the desolate places,' (Mal. i. 4.), and continued for a few centuries longer a great and prosperous community, yet sentence of extinction was only suspended, not recalled: and for the last thousand years, the name of Edom has been extinct among the nations, and its territory a desolate waste, almost without inhabitants.

Nor has the promise of 'deliverance' to Zion been less signally fulfilled. The lapse of a few years from the time of Obadiah saw the Jews restored from the Babylonish captivity; and restored, too, a wiser and better people than they had been for many generations before. A long course of comparative prosperity succeeded. While the heathen nations around continued to be trampled under foot by all the great powers—Mede, Persian, and Greek, that successively swayed the destinies of the East, the Jews were upon the whole befriended

by foreign princes. And under their own Asmo-
nean kings, those 'saviours who should come up on
mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau,' they were
enabled not merely to repossess their own land, but
to extend their frontier so as to include Idumea
itself; thereby making themselves the masters of
those very children of Edom who had cheered on
the Babylonians in their assault on the holy city,
saying 'in the day of Jerusalem, Rase it, rase it,
even to the foundation,' Psal. cxxxvii. 7.

The truth of the prophetic testimony, in regard
to Edom, has of late years received remarkable con-
firmation from the researches of travellers. After
having lain concealed for centuries amidst the in-
accessible fastnesses of Arabia Petrea, the ruins of
the ancient capital of Idumea have been, as it were,
disinterred; and a picture thereby presented to the
world of past grandeur and present desolation, than
which, nothing can be conceived better illustrative
of this and the other prophecies respecting Edom.
The ruined temples, theatres, and aqueducts of
Petra, all of them excavated out of the solid rock,
and chiselled into the most exquisite symmetry,
fully confirm all that the prophets tell us of the
pristine glory of the people who 'dwelt in the clefts
of the rock;' whilst the stern desolation of the in-
hospitable solitudes which surround these colossal
remains, decisively proves that Divine judgment has
overswept and blasted a land which, incredible as
its present aspect seems to render it, is known to
have been for long ages a fertile and populous
region, the highway and emporium of the commerce
of the East. It is thus certified by the most un-
ambiguous evidence, that the ancient splendour of
Edom, as described in holy writ, is no poetic fig-
ment; the announcement of its eventual desolation,
no idle threat.

PRAYER.

Blessed be the Lord God who hath guarded
us during the unconscious hours of sleep, and
raised us in health and safety to behold the
cheering light of a new day! O grant that our
sins may be scattered with the morning cloud;
and that, like the risen sun, we may be pre-
pared to run the race of piety and duty this
day. We are not worthy, O our God, to ren-
der thee praise for thy goodness, far less to im-
plore the protection and help which are needful
to keep us safe, and good, and happy; but we
come before thee, not in our own name; we
come in the name, and plead the merits of him
who died, the just for the unjust, and who ever
liveth to make intercession for us. We believe
that for his sake thou art willing, not merely
to accept our persons and services, but to
bestow upon us all the blessings we need,
and greater blessings than we can ask. Vouch-
safe us then, O God, we beseech thee, grace
to lay now to heart, and to reduce this day
to practice, the solemn lessons of thy holy
word. Help us to act on the conviction, that

thou art faithful in visiting for sin, not less than
in rewarding righteousness; and that though
the wicked exalt themselves as the eagle, and
set their nest among the stars, yet thence wilt
thou bring them down. O let us not hope, that
because sentence against an evil work is not
executed speedily, therefore our sins shall not at
last find us out. Instead of deceiving ourselves
through the pride of our hearts, and supposing
that our mountain standeth strong, may we cease
from every refuge of lies, and from every arm
of created might, and put our trust in thee, the
only Rock of salvation. Instead of ranging our-
selves with the enemies of thy church and people,
and rejoicing over them, and speaking proudly
in the day of their distress, may we seek the
peace of Jerusalem, and cast in our lot with
those upon whom thou hast declared that there
shall be deliverance and holiness. From every
thing that is hateful in thy sight, and injurious
to our own or our brother's well-being, do thou
defend us, O God; and whatsoever is honour-
ing to thee, and good for us, do thou be pleased,
even though we have asked it not, to bestow
upon us. Prosper thine own cause, O Lord,
throughout the world. Let them be confounded
and turned back who hate Zion; let them be as
the grass which withereth before it grow up!
Thou didst remember Edom, the enemy of thy
people Israel, and didst reward her as she had
served them; covering her with shame, and
cutting her off for ever: so let all thine enemies
perish, O Lord! But let them that love thee
be as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength.
Favourably regard that branch of the church of
Christ to which we belong; the parish in which
we dwell; and thy servants who minister in the
same. And graciously remember and reward
all among us who bring forth good fruit and are
rich in faith and in charity; for their earthly
things, giving them heavenly; for their temporal,
eternal; for their corruptible, those which do
not decay. All we ask is in the name of Jesus
Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXIII.

SCRIPTURE—2 JOHN.

REMARKS.

It would be difficult to name any writings which
more clearly reflect the temper of their author, not-
withstanding the absence of all direct reference to
the subject, than the Gospel and Epistles of John.

A spirit of holy charity pervades every sentence; and no intelligent student can rise from their perusal without feeling as confident that they are the productions of a man full of devoted love, alike to his Master and his brethren, as if they had been written for the express purpose of telling us so. The triumph of the ancient statuary, who stamped his own image so deeply on the buckler of his Minerva, that it could not be defaced without destroying the statue, may find its parallel in the curious felicity with which St John has made his writings the mirror of his own benevolent spirit.

This remark is peculiarly applicable to his letter to the elect lady and her children. The 'beloved disciple' appears in every line. How plainly is the gentle spirit of the disciple who leaned on Jesus' bosom, revealed in the affectionate interest with which he speaks of this lady and her family! How characteristic of the apostle, who in his declining years was wont, as primitive legends tell, to address to the Christian assemblies the brief and simple precept, 'Little children, love one another,' is the solemn earnestness with which he presses on his correspondents the duty of walking in mutual love and charity! Who but that devoted servant and advocate of Christ, who refused so much as to remain in the same bath with the heretic Cerinthus, could have penned the emphatic warning against Antichristian teachers; or exhorted a matron eminent for her hospitality, not so much as to bid 'God speed,' far less receive into her house, such as vented any doctrine derogatory to the divine Redeemer.

The epistle, however, is not valuable solely from the light which it sheds on the character of the author. It breathes throughout a spirit of holy love, characteristic not more of the beloved disciple, than of that blessed gospel of which he was a minister. What a lovely example of domestic piety does it set before us, in the elect lady and her children walking in the truth! How encouraging and instructive is it to mark the delight with which an apostle contemplates the spiritual progress of his converts! Nor are the fatherly counsels which he addresses to this honoured household, without their claim on our attention. To abide in the doctrine of Christ; to hold fast the grand fact of the incarnation; to shun the delusions of false doctrine; and to practise the great and indispensable commandment of Christian love and charity: these are counsels which are never either unnecessary or inapplicable to the church of God.

One injunction—that which relates to the proper mode of treating heretical teachers, may seem at first sight scarcely compatible with the spirit of Christian love. Yet due reflection will satisfy you, that even this injunction, instead of being harsh, is the dictate of a deep and pure charity. It is no true kindness, either to heretics themselves, or to those who are exposed to the infection of their opinions, to show them the deference and honour due only to faithful evangelists. No one can receive a heretic into his house without at least seeming to countenance his errors. And, surely, the love which the gospel enjoins cannot require us to

do what may scandalize our brethren, or to abet, however indirectly, a teacher who is the enemy of Christ and of men's souls. To persecute heretics, or even to use them with incivility, were indeed opposed alike to the lessons of the gospel, and to the dictates of humanity. But to withhold from them our countenance, is not persecution; to refuse to acknowledge them as our instructors, is not incivility. It may suit the temper of a latitudinarian charity to regard doctrinal error as innocent, and to treat its advocates as if their opinions did not affect their claim on our brotherly-kindness. But the charity of the gospel is based on love to the truth, not less than on love to men; and such is its nature, that it constrains us to seek the well-being, rather than the pleasure or praise of our fellow-creatures; to offend them for the good of their souls, rather than caress and soothe them, when thereby their salvation might be hindered.

PRAYER.

By thy goodness, O Lord, we find ourselves before the throne of thy grace, at the close of another day. To some of our fellow-creatures, the day has been a season of bodily anguish; to some a time of mental distress; to others a passage through affliction to death. But to us it has been a day of health; of soundness of mind; of personal comfort; of means of improvement; of unnumbered mercies. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits, who keepeth our feet from falling, our eyes from tears, and our souls from death. Alas! that our conduct has been so little accordant with thy mercies, O our God. Furnished by thy fatherly goodness with so many new reasons for loving and serving thee, we ought to have this day conquered some sin, and added to our acts of virtue; we ought to have grown in love to Christ, and in love to one another; in knowledge of thy truth, and in zeal for thy commandments: instead of which, we have been content to live in great forgetfulness of the God of our mercies, and in grievous unconcern about thy cause and glory; and have only added to the load of guilt which days, and months, and years have been accumulating. O God, have mercy upon us, and take away our sins. Have respect, we pray thee, to the merits and advocacy of him who became incarnate, and suffered, and died for our redemption. For his sake, forgive our sins, and restore us to thy favour; a new heart do thou also give us; and from all our idols do thou cleanse us. As thou condescendest to give us the name of thy children, be pleased also to confer the spirit of sons, even love to thee our Father, confidence in thy goodness, and jealousy of thine honour. As thou permittest us to call ourselves after Christ, be pleased also to shed upon our souls a spirit of devotedness

to his cause, a holy zeal for his glory, and a double portion of his mind and temper. As thou commandest us to love each other, and all our Christian brethren in the truth, be pleased also to enable us to exercise towards all men that charity which rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; and which regardeth nothing as good for a brother, which is not good for his soul. And these great and precious blessings, do thou mercifully grant us now, even now, O our God; so that though we deserve never more to rise from the beds whither we now go, we may yet both lay us down in peace, and awake in safety, thy hand sustaining us. For all who are dear to us, as for ourselves, we entreat thy blessings. Let thy covering wings be over us all; thy protecting arms around us all. And grant, that at the last, when the shadows of the long night shall have fallen on our path, we may dwell together in that blessed land where there is no darkness, and no sin, neither any more death. And now may grace be with us, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXVI. 1—6.

SCRIPTURE—JONAH I. II.

REMARKS.

The view of Jonah's character with which this prophecy opens is far from prepossessing. He is honoured with a special commission as the prophet of Jehovah; but instead of executing it, he peremptorily refuses to obey. That he may not proceed to Nineveh, he hastens to the opposite coast; that he may not be disturbed by any renewal of the command, he tries to place the sea between him and the place of the divine oracle. Yet let us not condemn Jonah for this wayward disregard of God's authority, without at the same time remembering that the perverse nature, to whose pleadings Jonah yielded, is our own, and that the disposition to evade commands which run counter to his wishes, is not peculiar to any one sinner. At all times, and in all places, men are to be found who 'flee from the presence of the Lord' to avoid the messages of his holy oracle, and rush into pleasure or business to drown the still small voice of the Spirit or of conscience.

It might have been expected that Jonah's contumacy would draw down upon him some signal token of the divine displeasure. But God's ways are not as our ways. That all-gracious Being is ever more bent on bringing his people to repentance, than on punishing them; and the calamities which attended the steps of the fugitive, were sent in mercy,

not in anger; to correct, not to punish. The wrath of God is manifested, not when he afflicts the backslider, but when he lets him alone. It is kindness, truest kindness, to make the way of transgressors hard; to strew the road to perdition with thorns rather than with roses. Nor are there any circumstances in the history of the prophet which more distinctly proclaim the mercy of his God than the course of corrective discipline to which he was subjected during his attempted flight to Tarshish.

Of Jonah's trials, the most remarkable was his temporary entombment 'in the belly of the fish.' This mystical burial of Jonah was indeed intended to serve other ends besides that of reclaiming him from his rebellion. It was, primarily, a miraculous interposition, designed to prepare the Ninevites for receiving his message with faith and reverence. The traces which still survive, in pagan mythology, of this singular event, show that it was widely known, and believed at the time; and its miraculous character obviously fitted it to form a divine attestation to the mission of the prophet. It was likewise intended to serve the further purpose of foreshadowing the resurrection of Christ. The time of Jonah's continuance in the belly of the fish is cited by our Lord himself as a type of his continuance in the grave, Luke xi. 30—32. And 'thus,' as has been well remarked, 'in the first and oldest of the prophets, for to Jonah belongs this pre-eminence, we perceive that the first image, the introductory representation which meets us in the opening of the prophetic canon, when we explore it in a Christian sense, is that of the great fact of Christ's resurrection.' Nevertheless, as respected Jonah himself, this miracle was the last and most important step in a process of providential discipline, designed to recall him to his God, and gratify him for the resumption of his sacred functions.

It is consolatory to reflect, that the same beneficent wisdom which presided over the discipline of Jonah, and meted out his trials one after another according to his need, still orders and regulates the afflictions of believers. The all-wise God will not send on his people one trial too few; neither will he inflict one too many. He knows the case of each of his children; and he will subject the backslider to that precise measure of discipline, and that only, which is necessary for his amendment. Yet let not the believer remain passive under the divine chastisements as if these were to operate on him as a charm, and against his will. He must *fear* as well as *bear* the rod; he must improve as well as endure the trial; and he must be specially careful to eschew that obduracy of heart which requires for its subjugation a long and bitter course of adversities. It is infinite condescension in Almighty God to descend to the task, if we may so speak, of framing expedients for the purpose of recalling men from their sins; and surely it must frightfully aggravate the backslider's guilt, when by hardening his neck under the divine corrections, he pours contempt on the condescension, not less than the laws of his God.

PRAYER.

We worship and praise thee, O Lord God, as the author of all our mercies. Though we are

altogether unworthy of thy regard, thou hast ever displayed, thou still displayest, the most benevolent concern for our well-being. From unbeginning eternity thy delights were with the sons of men; and in the fullness of time thou didst send forth thy well-beloved Son to die for us men, and for our salvation. Thou hast built a fair world for us to dwell in. Thou hast bestowed upon us bodies curiously made, and souls wondrously endowed. Thou hast caused our cup to run over with temporal mercies. And so good and gracious art thou, that even the adversities which mingle in our lot, are all ordered, regulated, and overruled through thy mercy, so as to advance our welfare, to make us sit loose to a sinful world, and to shut us up to thyself, the only rest and portion of the immortal soul. We desire to esteem it a new token of thy goodness, O God, that we have been all spared to begin another day in peace. Our sleep might have been death; our bed might have been in hell; fire might have consumed our dwelling; wicked men might have spoiled our goods. But thou hast been our shade on our right hand, and the voice of health and rejoicing is still heard under our roof. O grant that our conduct before thee this day, may be in some good degree answerable to thine invariable conduct towards us. Let not a day begin in professions of gratitude, and end in acts of heartless forgetfulness and rebellion. May the Holy Spirit dwell in each of our hearts to defend us against such an issue. May he strengthen us to watch against evil; to be diligent and conscientious in our several callings; careful of our time; thankful for our mercies; gentle and considerate in our mutual intercourse; patient under our crosses and vexations. Should bad example allure us, may he enable us to resist its influence. Should scenes of temptation invite us, may he enable us to turn from them and pass away. Should the black shadows of adversity fall on our path, may he enable us to pierce the cloud with the eye of faith, and to bear the rod, and him who sends it. Throughout the day, may we have grace to secure, at whatever sacrifice of personal feeling, and at whatever risk of ridicule, the sweet testimony of a good conscience; and being thus upheld, and guided, may we find ourselves, at its close, a stage nearer to the heavenly rest, as well as to the end of this transitory life. Dwell with us as a household, making our habitation a Bethel where thou art; a Bethany, where the peace of Christ abides, as well in the day of affliction as in the season of joy. Bless all who are dear to us; whether near or at a distance;

whether in this or in other lands; whether on the land or on the sea; graciously answer our prayers for their well-being, and their prayers for ours, O God of our fathers! Bless and protect our earthly sovereign. Bless all thy faithful ministers, and multiply their number. Be the guide of inexperienced youth; the staff of declining age; heal the sick; convert the unconverted; build up thy saints in their most holy faith; and let the ends of the earth soon see thy salvation. Hear, O God, in heaven thy dwelling place, these our petitions; and when thou hearest, forgive, accept, sanctify, and save us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXII. 4—7.

SCRIPTURE—3 JOHN.

REMARKS.

A well-informed commentator asserts that we seldom hear this epistle quoted, but in reproof of lordly tyrants, or prating troublesome fellows in the church. If this be the fact, it argues little for either the piety or the discrimination of the majority of readers; for assuredly the epistle contains many things worthy of being produced besides the notice of Diotrephes. The severe censure indeed, pronounced on this turbulent presbyter, ought not to be overlooked; demonstrative, as it is, of the jealousy with which the inspired founders of the church regarded that spirit of antichristian usurpation which had begun, even in their times, to exhibit itself. But this censure occupies only a fifth part of the epistle; it is introduced not so much on its own account, as to explain the apostle's reason for addressing Gaius a member, rather than Diotrephes the minister of the church, on the subjects of the reception and treatment due to Christian itinerants; and it ought therefore, one would think, instead of engrossing the reader's attention, to have the effect of more fully recommending, by the contrast, the benignant tone of approbation which pervades the remaining portion. To every mind open to generous impulses, the portrait of Demetrius, the itinerant evangelist, must afford a far more pleasing study than that of Diotrephes. And it surely says little for either the impartiality or the high moral tone of modern Christians, that the arrogance of the latter should be better recollected, and more frequently adduced, than the honourable fame of the former.

The individual, however, whom the epistle invites us mainly to contemplate is neither the ambitious Diotrephes, nor the estimable Demetrius; but the apostle's own correspondent, the well-beloved Gaius. In this man, though only a private member of the church, we are presented with a finished pattern of Christian excellence. Observe how many

features of character, worthy of universal imitation, meet in him. He is the 'well-beloved Gaius;' his spiritual attainments are so exalted that the apostle can express no better wish for his bodily health and worldly interests, than that they should flourish in an equal degree; he is abundant in labours of love; he is widely known and honoured as a blessing to the church! It is not surprising that such a man should have been applied to, when the offices of hospitality were required in behalf of the brethren, or that St John should have felt himself at liberty to commend strangers, such as Demetrius, to his care rather than to that of Diotrophes. By Gaius, a command on this subject would be regarded as imposing not a burden, but an honour and privilege. Nor would all the opposition of the pastor and his faction be sufficient to make him shut his house or his heart against a Christian missionary, especially when introduced to him by St John. Happy the church which numbered among its members such a character as Gaius! Happy the brethren and strangers who found at the various points of their evangelistic journeys, such a cordial 'fellow-helper to the truth!'

Nor ought the friendship of the beloved disciple to Gaius to pass unnoticed; illustrative, as it is, of the *individualizing* nature of that brotherly-love which the gospel encourages. The apostles were no converts to that vague and general philanthropy, so much extolled in later times, which overlooks and merges the individual in the species. Men who, like them, had the daily care of all the churches, might indeed have been excused, though in their attention to the collective mass they had neglected individual members; though in writing works for the Christian world at large, they had failed to descend to correspondence with private friends. But the apostles stand in no need of such an apology. Their concern for the Christian community did not prevent them taking and expressing an interest in individual Christians. Their benevolence was wide in its range, but not on that account vague in its regards. St Paul could single out his friend Onesiphorus, and pray for him with as undivided a heart as if no larger circle of friends existed to fill it; and St John could snatch an hour to pen an affectionate letter to the well-beloved Gaius, without in any measure encroaching on the time allotted to the composition of more important works. Let us imitate, while we admire, the large yet discriminating charity of the apostles. Nor let us forget, in estimating their Christian kindness, to acknowledge and adore the condescension and love of that Holy Spirit whose instruments they were in their private intercourse, not less than in their public labours; in their letters to individuals, not less than in their more general and extended compositions.

PRAYER.

Blessed be thy name, O Lord God, for encouraging us to pray to thee, and to expect to be heard. Thou hast revealed thyself as seated on a throne of grace. Thou hast appointed a Mediator who, by his obedience and sufferings

in the room of sinners, has made it possible, for thee, the just and holy God, to receive and bless the sinner. Thou hast set him at thy right hand to present our prayers, and intercede for us. Thou hast sent down many a precious promise, that we may send it up again in prayer. And for our farther encouragement, thou hast recorded the experience of a cloud of witnesses who have found in prayer a key to unlock the treasury of thy grace. Emboldened by these considerations, we, thine unworthy servants, again fall down before thee, and prefer our prayers and praises at thy throne. Another day of our appointed time on earth has passed away, and in passing has left us greater debtors than before to thy mercy, greater offenders than before against thy holy laws. We acknowledge thy continued goodness, O God; we confess and lament the continuance of our ingratitude; we beseech thee, for the sake of our Redeemer, to take away our sins, and impress upon our hearts a sense of thy mercy. While we grieve over our sins and shortcomings, may we discover their origin in that root of bitterness, an evil and apostate heart; and may a growing sense of our natural sinfulness, and of the consequent impurity of our best acts, lead us to discard all self-dependence; to rest our hope of acceptance solely on the righteousness of Jesus Christ; and to look up constantly for thy help amid the duties and temptations of this mortal life. Follow with thy blessing, O God, the reading of thy holy word at this time; and enable us to shun the temper which it condemns, as well as to exemplify the graces which it stamps with thine approval. Deliver thy church from all such as love to have the pre-eminence, and seek their own, not the things that are Christ's; and multiply among us and everywhere, those who walk in the truth, who love Christ and his ministers, and who have no greater joy than in promoting, according to their ability, the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Peace be on all such, and on the whole household of God! And help us, now before thee, to follow and imitate, not them that do evil, but them that do good, so that we too may have a good report of all men, and of the truth itself, and, above all, enjoy thine approbation, O our God! And now we desire, again, to commend to thee all who are dear to us. Vouchsafe to them the same blessings which we ask for ourselves; and grant that, however far and long separated on earth, we may all be ever tending to the same blessed point, and meet at last in the same happy and eternal home. Preserve us through the dark watches of the night. And on the morning of

a new day, may we arise with renewed strength, and quickened piety, to love and serve thee better than we have hitherto done. And all that we ask is for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XXIX. 3—9.

SCRIPTURE—JONAH III. IV.

REMARKS.

CHAP. III. We see here the benefit of sanctified affliction to the ministers of God's word. By it they are made experimentally to feel the weight of the divine displeasure on account of their own sins, the bitterness of repentance, the sweetness of pardon, and the necessity of obedience. They are thus better qualified than ever for the work of the Lord. They are made so to fear God, as to have no other fear. Their commission is to speak to those to whom they are sent, not what pleases themselves, or may please others; but simply and fearlessly what God bids them speak, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. God by his servants warns sinners before he destroys them. He has no pleasure in their death: and his very warnings, while they testify that he observes and is angry at their sins, imply his compassions and mercy. We ought to admire the grace of God in the prophet, and towards Nineveh; in the prophet, who, a stranger in a far distant heathen city, proceeds along its crowded streets, and bold as a lion cries aloud, and repeats his cry in the hearing of all, that a speedy destruction awaits them from God for their sins; and towards Nineveh, which he in his sovereignty had chosen to visit with his words, while he left so many other heathen, and doubtless equally wicked cities, unvisited and unwarned. Was there ever a more striking instance than we have here of the mighty power of the word of God? A short sentence serves to awaken the innumerable inhabitants. They believe God, and a vast practical reformation of this corrupt people is the immediate result. Thus, by this seed of the word, and the divine power accompanying it, a nation is, as it were, born at once. Fear of the divine judgments generally diffused among rulers and their subjects, is a necessary means of preparing them for seeking mercy; and it is a blessed time when princes and people, to whom the word of God comes, unite together in the feelings and expressions of a genuine repentance; when kings giving command to fast, and pray, and repent, and themselves setting the example, all the people, in the same spirit, obey and follow. It is then that a sinful nation becomes a penitent nation, and, as a nation, may expect mercy of the Lord. God observes the fruits of his word in those who hear it; and when they turn to him, he arrests his anger, and shows how graciously he looks on those who are poor and of a contrite spirit, and who tremble at his word.

CHAP. IV. It is painful and humiliating to see what unsanctified and selfish tempers may long remain, even in a true servant of God; and what a rebellious spirit will dare to think and speak towards the Most High. He who formerly fled from God, and was brought back in so signal a manner, now finds fault with God to his face, for being so merciful as to spare Nineveh after all that had been said and done. In his ignorance and folly, he seems to have thought that God's honour and his own were pledged to its overthrow; and that the threatened destruction should have been allowed to sweep its terrible course over the city, penitent though it was, rather than that occasion should be afforded for saying that his word had not been fulfilled. He was presumptuously judging for God and for himself. We see that men may sometimes pray to God with a mixture of mortified pride and anger; and ask of him what would be infinitely injurious to themselves. Yet he will sometimes bear with this, though he will assuredly reprove and correct them for it, and withhold from them the ruinous answers they desire. If the prophet would have that spared which was the gift of God's goodness to him, and is sadly grieved at the loss of it, how much more may not God preserve to himself a multitude both of rational and irrational creatures which he has formed with wonderful skill and power, and whose preservation he can make greatly instrumental in promoting his glory? Was not Jonah himself a monument of God's mercifulness? and why had he soon forgotten this? He did not deserve the pity that had been shown to himself; and why did he not reflect on this? Let us see in this wonderful history what poor human nature is, and magnify God, whose ways are not as our ways, neither his thoughts as our thoughts; who because he is God and not man, does not consume the seed of Jacob.

PRAYER.

O most holy and most merciful Lord God! we would come to thee this morning, to offer up to thee our united prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, thy well-beloved Son, through whom alone thou wilt hear and answer us. O let thy Spirit help our infirmity in prayer. Humble us under a deep sense of our sinfulness in thy sight. Alas! we do not know sufficiently the plagues of our own hearts; what amount of corruption, unbelief, pride, and unthankfulness, there is in every one of us. Lord, reveal us to ourselves, that we may loathe ourselves in our sight, and come to thee for pardon, and purification, and increase of all grace. How wonderful, O God, are thy compassions to guilty men! Thou warnest sinners to flee from the wrath to come; and when they repent and turn to thee, thou receivest them graciously, and lovest them freely, and savest them from everlasting destruction, through the death and mediation of thy dear Son. O come and save us for thy mercies' sake. O how much dost thou magnify thy for-

bearance and thy grace towards thy unworthy servants. Thou chastenest them for their sins, but thou dost not utterly cast them off. May we, O most gracious God, be kept from offending thee. Do thou thyself keep us; for we dare not trust in our own wisdom, or strength, or goodness. Make thy grace sufficient for us, and perfect thy strength in our weakness. And as we must stand indebted to thy mercy every day, O enable us readily to extend mercy to others who offend us, and to be glad when we see others sharers in thy mercy with us. Let thy precious word of salvation, O Lord, speedily be sent to all the heathen people of the world; and let thy Almighty Spirit make it as a fire, and as a hammer, to break their rocky hearts in pieces, bringing thus the people under thee, and making them believe and repent unto salvation, to the glory of thy name, and to the praise of our Lord Jesus Christ. And do thou grant unto all thy servants whom thou hast called into the ministry of thy word, whether at home or abroad, that with all boldness, faithfulness, and patience, they may declare thy truth; and open thou the hearts of sinners, to receive with meekness the ingrafted word of life, which is able to save their souls: so that all the kingdoms of the world may soon become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ. We would now thank thee, O Lord, for having spared us through the darkness of the night, and for having called us, as at this moment, to look again towards thy holy temple in heaven. Fill us with a holy fear of thee. Help us this day to live to thy glory, amidst all the temptations and trials which may await us. Be thou surety to us for good; blessing each one of us according to our need, and according to thy manifold mercies, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIV.

SCRIPTURE—JUDE.

REMARKS.

We should bless God for having so richly furnished his church and people, with all needful directions and warnings for all the parts of a Christian's duty. The truth and ways of Christ being contrary to the bent of our fallen nature, and his people having in them still that which wars against the law of their minds, and strives to bring them into captivity to the law of sin which is in their members, they are in continual danger of being led aside by the error of the wicked, and of falling from their own sted-

fastness; and, but for his constant grace, every one of them would so fall. He, therefore, reminds them of the necessity of steadfastness in him, and warns them of the awful condemnation that awaits apostates, and false unholy professors. He would have them especially to beware of those who, because he is gracious, and freely pardons his people's sins, take to themselves, and teach others to take liberty to indulge even in the very grossest sins. He describes to them the character and sentiments of these wretched and dangerous men, and the dreadful fate that awaits them. They pamper and please the flesh; they hate and despise the control of government, however just; spurning all control of shame or of power. They boast of liberty, but they know not in what true liberty consists; and, pursuing their mad course, they never find it. They will not believe that that man is truly and blessedly free, who is in willing subjection to the Father of his spirit, to the almighty, eternal King, and who loves and keeps his laws: nor that this liberty is found in Christ alone, who by the new birth of his Spirit, introduces the sinner into his own holy kingdom, where he reigns supreme, and satisfies all of the perfect happiness of their lot in being his servants. They never understand that they are the slaves of their passions, and of this world; and that they must, however reluctantly, stand to be judged by him whom they would not have to reign over them; and by that holy law which they greatly hated and dishonoured. The dark description here given of these men, should lead true believers to stand afar off from them, lest they become partakers of their sins and of their plagues. We must never rail against any one, as they do against those in dignified rank or office, speaking evil of dignities. Our freedom from their sins, gives us no title to speak thus of them; for even the holiest archangels dare not rail against the greatest and wickedest of apostate spirits. It becomes us rather to pray that the Lord would rebuke them. However much the existence of such ungodly and licentious men in the world, and even sometimes springing out of the church, is to be deplored, and their example and fellowship shunned; yet forewarned by Christ, as we are, we are not to be surprised when they appear. Our great care should be, always to be armed against their principles, and to keep aloof from their polluting society. We must not feel secure, nor be high-minded, but fear, seeking to establish our faith more and more on Christ; to remember constantly his word; to cultivate the love of God; to continue instant in prayer; and to be habitually looking forward to the coming of our Lord, who, while he will receive his faithful humble followers to himself, will visit these his enemies with everlasting destruction from his presence, and from the glory of his power. And, while it becomes us to feel a holy indignation at the sentiments and conduct of those of whom we are here warned, we should feel a tender compassion for their souls, and strive by all due means to fill them with a salutary and just fear of the everlasting fire, towards which they are assuredly hastening. And remembering what we are, and what the world is in which we

live, let us daily commit ourselves to the keeping of God's grace, ascribing to him the honours which are due to his name; who possesses of right, universal and glorious dominion; and who is the fountain and pattern of all rule, and dignity, and holiness; and to whom every knee shall bow, and tongue confess that he is Lord.

PRAYER.

O God, we would now lay ourselves down at thy footstool, and, through the great Mediator who sits at thy right hand, would adore thee. Thou art great, and thy greatness is unsearchable to all but thyself, and thy Son, and Holy Spirit. O teach us to think of, and feel aright thy holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Make us sensible of the glory and majesty of thy kingdom; and of the amazing love which thou hast shown to guilty men, in sending thine own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to redeem them from the dreadful curse of thy law, and to raise them to the favour, the likeness, and the enjoyment of thee through all eternity. O may it please thee by thy Holy Spirit to open our eyes, and to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto thee. O may he create in us the faith of thine elect, that we with our whole hearts may embrace thy Son as our Saviour, and be by him delivered from all the most grievous evils of our sad apostacy from thee. May he lead us forth more and more from a world that lieth in wickedness, and from our own deceitful carnal hearts. Let his love constrain us to live no longer unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and who rose again. Let us not be left to turn thy grace into licentiousness, nor to indulge in that sin from which Christ came to save his people. Fill us with a perpetual sense of thy holy indignation against all sin; and O let those who name the name of Christ, be by thee led to depart from all iniquity. Teach us in our very hearts, and by our tongues and lives, to reverence all thine ordinances: so that instead of speaking evil of dignities, we may bless thee for them, praying for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. Pardon, gracious God, the sins of which any of us have been guilty this day. We confess we have offended in many things, and in all have come short of thy glory. Accept of our thanks for thy manifold mercies; and keep us safely through the night, that whether we wake or sleep, we may be ever with thee. These our prayers, we present to thee in the name of thy beloved Son. For his sake, accept, and answer us, O God; and to thee be all glory, now and for ever. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM L. 16—23.

SCRIPTURE—MICAH I. II.

REMARKS.

CHAP. I. We have here the sublime and appalling description of God's wrath against the seed of Jacob, a people in covenant with him, and to whom he had been so favourable, but who had become idolatrous and wicked like the heathen nations around them. The transgressions of such a people are more hateful to God than those of the heathen; for they are trampling on love and mercies, on privileges and vows; and they bring greater dishonour on him, the holy One of Israel, whose people ought, above all others, to be holy even as he is holy, and pure even as he is pure. He here declares the cause of his anger against them. It is their sin. Indeed, nothing but sin is a provocation to him. It is for sin that he punishes the world and his church. And yet such are the compassions of the righteous Lord who taketh vengeance, that he has no pleasure in the misery which he inflicts, ver. 8, 9. Jesus wept over Jerusalem while he saw and pronounced its awful doom. There is a point of sinning reached by men, and by churches, which does not admit of remedy. The wound, kept so long open, becomes at last incurable and fatal. The blood of Christ being despised and trodden under foot, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation to devour that adversary. This should make us to fear, and to turn before iniquity prove our ruin. And when we see men going on in sin, it becomes us to mourn and lament over their conduct, which if it be not repented of, and forsaken, will certainly bring upon them, either here or hereafter, the righteous and terrible judgments of God. It is mournful to think what sad use ungodly men make of the judgments of God on a people that are called by his name. They reproach the Lord for them. They speak evil of his holy religion, and harden themselves in their impieties by those very things which should fill them with alarm; for, if judgment begin at the house of God, what shall their end be? The people of God should, therefore, seek to avoid those things which will be made matter of impious and insulting triumph by those who act like the idolatrous inhabitants of Gath.

CHAP. II. In this chapter the prophet denounces a woe from God on those who compose themselves to the task of contriving wicked schemes of self-aggrandisement, and violence, and fraud, and oppression, and who have these ready to execute whenever opportunity offers. Such conduct shows how deep and strong are the very principles of wickedness in their hearts, since they go so deliberately and coolly to the perpetration of it. The Lord knoweth all this, and is filled with a just indignation when he sees it. He will devise a punishment suitable for all such as thus pervert their hearts and ways. He will make them fall into the pit which they have dug for others, and fasten their own feet in their own snare. Let every

one that fears the Lord beware of incurring his anger for any such thing. Let him occupy his thoughts with truth, and justice, and mercy, and devise how he may best serve the cause of righteousness, that he may be prepared to engage in this service whenever God gives him the means and the call to do so. A man's life, we may rest assured, will partake of the character of his habitual thoughts; for out of the heart are the issues of life; and then again the very thought of wickedness is sin, and is well known to God; though it should never come forth unto open act, he will publish it abroad at the last day. The people that are here described do not like to be told of their sin, or warned against it by the ministers of the divine word, and hence God at length in judgment ceases to send a messenger, or a message to them, and so they are left to go on without shame or fear, till ruin come suddenly upon them, ver. 6. Sinners may silence, in this manner, the ministers of Christ; by doing so they are attempting to shut out and keep away from themselves the Holy Spirit of God. He also may depart in his wrath, and cease to strive with such men, but this will arise from his holy sovereignty, and not from any inability to break through the barriers which the sinner interposes. And what is it that this poor sinner is doing, who resists the warning voice and the striving Spirit of God? He is acting as his own enemy, by rejecting the good word and the good Spirit of God. Is it wise to prefer falsehood to truth; or a false prophet to a true? And yet many of those who are called by the name of gods, choose to listen to prophets whose words are evidently not from God, allowing, as they do, the indulgence of the things which God hates. Indeed this is the very reason why such prophets are chosen by wicked men. They would rather be flattered and indulged than saved, obvious and fatal as the folly of such conduct really is.

PRAYER.

Our Father which art in heaven, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, bend thine ear, this morning, to hear our prayers. O let this word of thine, which we have been reading, sink deep into all of our hearts. Inspire us with a holy fear of thy righteous judgments, that we may not commit sin against thee. O let us not forget that thy holy eye is continually upon us, that thou seest the thoughts of our hearts, and ponderest the paths of our feet. Deliver us, O Lord, from an unbelieving and ungodly heart, ever inclining us to those sins which have drowned others in destruction and perdition. O never suffer us to trust in ourselves, or in an arm of flesh. Never let us listen with distrust to any word of thine, for we need all thy words; they are all given by inspiration of thee, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. And, gracious God, may we never be left by thee to think or act in such a manner as should prevail

with our deceitful hearts to make them rise up against the messages of thy servants to us, and provoke thy good Spirit to depart. O may we rather seek salvation and thy glory than to be pleased and gratified after the desire of the flesh and of the mind. We beseech thee to cause thy word to dwell in us richly, by making us partakers of the abundant grace of thy Spirit, and by inclining to meditate on thy statutes day and night. May Christ dwell in our hearts by faith, and may we be rooted and grounded in love to thee who hast first loved us; and if any of us are still strangers to thy saving grace in the heart, O be pleased to come in thy rich grace to quicken and enlighten us, that we all may be to the praise of the glory of thy grace, accepted in the Beloved, and may walk in newness of life. O Lord, have mercy on us all, and bless us all, that so we having thee dwelling in the midst of us, may be safe from fear of evil, and may serve thee in love and holy fear all the days of our lives. Wash us in the blood of thy Son; put on us the garment of his salvation, animate us with his Spirit, lead us on after his example, enable us to be faithful to him; and when our service on earth is over, O may we find ourselves welcomed by him into that blessed world where all thy people are ever with thee, freed from all corruptions, and temptations, and sufferings, and where they serve thee with unspeakable joy, day and night, in thy temple. Grant this, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with thee and the Holy Spirit be all glory, and dominion, world without end. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLV. 1—6.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION I.

REMARKS.

This chapter, the opening of the sublimest and most mysterious book of the New Testament, speaks of a new and most glorious revelation of Jesus Christ himself as he now is, and of his kingdom as it advances through the world, and down through future ages to its fullness of numbers, and to its perfection in the everlasting heavens. The book is indeed dark and hard to be understood, but then its darkness is not that of a night all cloudy. It is bespangled with many shining stars of clear and blessed truth, and is often irradiated with the bursting splendour of the Sun of righteousness himself. Christ is its Alpha and Omega, its beginning and ending. There is a special blessing pronounced on those who shall read, understand, and keep its sayings; which teaches us that it ought to be read with a humble and holy

inquisitiveness that it may be understood, through the teaching of the divine Spirit, and that an intelligent obedience should be yielded to its blessed commands. It is addressed, in the first instance, to the *seven* churches of Asia, a perfect number, embracing all the varieties of character and circumstances which can belong to every true church in any age of the world, and the book was intended for all churches of Christ in all future ages. It begins with blessing, and is thus characteristic of the gospel. The fountain of this blessing is the eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Spirit is called the seven spirits, to denote the completeness of his power to accomplish all the purposes of grace in all the churches, and to fill them with his most blessed fruits. God's blessing his people leads them to bless and praise him, especially for his unspeakable gift, and to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, because of his love, and death, and all the glorious fruits and consequences of union with him. No wonder believers love to dwell on the name and character of Christ. It is as ointment poured forth. His three-fold office: witness or prophet; the first begotten from the dead; the priest who was dead for sin, but is alive again, to make intercession for his people, and to go before them in glory; and the prince of the kings of the earth, head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. He will come to judge the world, and be the object of deepest universal attention to all men and angels, and of unutterable anguish to those who crucified him, and were not crucified with him. Believers rejoice in the hope of his coming; hail the prospect of it, and say, Amen. The apostle had in Patmos, to which he had been banished on account of Christ, a wonderful revelation of the glorious person of the incarnate Son of God. This was on the Lord's day, when he was in the Spirit, much occupied with spiritual and divine things. It is in affliction, and on that blessed day, that we may still expect the brightest manifestations of Christ's glory by the Spirit; for he walks in the midst of the churches, which are lights set up and kindled by him, to make men see and know him, and his people behold his beauty as they inquire in his temple. His beauty, so full of majesty, when clearly seen, overpowers the faculties, and lays the creature low in deep self-abasement; and it requires the putting forth of the gracious power of Christ himself to raise and assure the souls before him when he says, 'Fear not.' It is with such sweetness and strength that it gives life from the dead; and how joyful is it to his people to know from himself that he is eternal, almighty, and has, as the Son of man, and the head of his church, dominion over death and hell; that he was dead and now lives for evermore, so that the benefits of his death shall be secured to all his people; so that they may know that he fixes the time and manner of their death; will pass through it with them, and cause them to share in that blessed life of his beyond death and the grave. How pleased should believers be when they think of this, and how ready to say Amen to it all. The ministers of the gospel are as angels, messengers sent by Christ to publish his truth and salvation,

and to pray sinners in his stead to be reconciled unto God; and they are as stars, receiving all their light from him, the Sun of righteousness, to shed it around, while he is personally invisible, and till he come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that now believe. And they are set in the churches as in candlesticks, to shine there in truth and holiness, and to attract the eyes of those who are still at a distance in the dark and dreary night of sin and death. Blessed are those eyes which see the ministers of the gospel shining in the light of Christ, and are by it devoted to Christ himself, beholding his glory, and changed unto the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

PRAYER.

How shall we, O Lord, who are sinful dust and ashes, appear before thee, who art so glorious in holiness, that if we could but see thee we should abhor ourselves. What blindness is this that sin has brought upon the eyes of our minds? What amazing ease and indifference of spirit is this which we feel when we kneel before thee, and take upon us to speak to thee. O God, do thou, in thy wonderful grace and power, remove our guilt, by leading us in repentance and faith to wash in Christ's blood. Does it not cleanse from all sin? O send thy quickening Spirit into our hearts, that we may live before thee. May he bring Christ the life unto our souls. May he open the eyes of our minds to see the matchless glory of thy only begotten Son, incarnate for our sakes, so that the power of that sight may humble us to the very dust, and we be made to feel the sweetness of his reviving word as it enters our ears and our hearts. O, for the glory of thine own name, let us be brought out of the death in trespasses and sins, to walk with Christ in newness of life. May we never be left any more to doubt his power and willingness to save us from sin, and death, and hell. We would cleave to him who is the resurrection and the life, that we may never die, and that we may find, when we leave this world, that he forsakes us not, but walks with us through the dark valley, and guides us past the shut gates of hell to his mansions of glory. And while he keeps us in this world, O may we be enabled rightly to understand and improve by his ministers, and ordinances, and word. Let us ever seek and ever find him in all these. May we never be absent from them. May we never find him absent, nor be guilty of provoking him to hide himself from our view. Clothe thy priests, O Lord, with salvation, that all thy saints may shout aloud for joy. Purify, defend, and bless thy church, and let the kingdom of thy dear Son be established in all the nations of the world.

Let antichrist be speedily consumed by the breath of Christ's own mouth; by the knowledge and power of that divine word which he speaks, but which his enemies hate, despise, and forbid to be known. O arise and plead thine own cause, and let thy Spirit and thy providence teach thy servants to read, understand, and keep the sayings that are written in this book. Let the heathen people fear thy name, and let all kings see thy glory. To thee, O most blessed Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to him thy well-beloved Son our Saviour, and to the Holy Ghost, our enlightener, sanctifier, and comforter, be glory, dominion and praise in earth among men, as in heaven among angels and spirits of the just made perfect. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CV.

SCRIPTURE—MICAH V. VI.

REMARKS.

CHAP. V. The daughter of troops here addressed, may refer either to the Assyrian, or to the Babylonian power. Both fulfilled the predictions of the prophet, in the contempt and cruelty with which they treated God's ancient people. Human instruments, as well as the elements of the material world, are equally at the call, and under the control of Jehovah. While he authorizes them to smite, he permits them not to destroy his servants. Their utmost violence and despite cannot overstep his appointment, but are made to promote his high designs. Ver. 2. A ray of hope has ever gladdened the darkest period of the church's history. The Star of Bethlehem in the land of Judah, rises upon the eye of faith in the dreariest night. Inconsiderable as Bethlehem was among the flourishing cities of the distinguished tribe to which it belonged, it was the predicted birth-place of him who was co-existent with the everlasting Father, and set apart in the counsels of eternity to his mediatorial work. It is his high prerogative to confer dignity, while he can receive no addition to his essential greatness from any adventitious cause. He selected his earthly condition not more in evidence of his condescension, than of his inherent majesty and glory. A humble cottage may still be dignified by the presence of the 'King of saints,' and the lowly heart is honoured to entertain a heavenly guest. Ver. 3—5. The Jews should, nevertheless, for a season be given up to be harassed and led captive by the Chaldeans, and their other enemies, until a remnant of that chosen seed, united in the gospel age with the believing Gentiles, would be fed by the hand of the good Shepherd, under whose authority and care his church would be blessed with safety and enlargement. Happy they who are found in him, who is at once the door, the food, and the shepherd of his

sheep. 'By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.' Ver. 5—15. He is the source of peace to his church. Although enemies and persecutors, numerous and strong as the Assyrian host, assail, he shall raise up wise and powerful guardians to defend his spiritual Zion, and even to carry the war into the territory of the enemy. The doctrine of his word, when first proclaimed by his commissioned servants, distilled as the dew upon a parched and barren world; yet the very heralds of mercy were terrible and destructive, 'even as the lion among the beasts of the forest,' to proud and obstinate opposers. In the latter days does God promise to save his redeemed people from all false refuges, to purify them from their defilements, and to remove every vestige of their former idolatries. So, when the truth descends into the soul, it detaches from all self-righteousness; it cleanses from every pollution of the flesh and of the spirit; and ever whispers in the ear of its disciples, 'little children, keep yourselves from idols.'

CHAP. VI. The inanimate creation is here summoned to listen to the expostulation of Jehovah with Israel, on account of their flagrant ingratitude. All nature will finally adore, when his judgments are made manifest. If the appeal which God makes to his ancient people, upon the ground of national mercies and deliverances, is felt to be resistless, is not the argument equally powerful when applied to ourselves? What blessings has he bestowed; what protection vouchsafed; what a marvellous interposition has he made in our behalf? But, alas! how unthankful! Yet, blessed be the compassionate Power that still pleads with us, we are not left in perplexity as to the means whereby the perturbed conscience may be soothed and pacified. It is not the costly oblation. It is not the accumulation of sacrificial offerings; much less is it the revolting rite which a murderous superstition has often practised, that can appease an offended Judge. The path of acceptance, and of duty, is clearly marked by the finger of God. He hath showed thee, O man, in the scriptures at large, 'what is good;' he hath spoken to thee by its types, and by its prophecies; he hath pointed out the good way of justification by faith, and the good way of personal obedience. He hath made peace by the death of Immanuel's cross, a believing view of which calms all the terror awakened by the consciousness of unexpiated guilt, and lays the foundation of a willing and devoted service. Then, and then only, shall we learn to do justly in reference to God, our neighbour, and ourselves; then, to be gentle, compassionate, and kind to others, because we have ourselves been forgiven; then, to walk humbly with our God, renouncing the various forms of pride and self-dependence so natural to the heart, and advancing in the path of life, subdued and quickened by the conscious and welcome presence of a heavenly witness, protector, and guide.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the great source of all light and holy influence. We bless thee that

thou hast in thy holy word shown us what is good, truly good for our fallen condition. We thank thee that thou hast there made known to us a Saviour, who has paid the debt incurred by all who shall believe in his name, who has satisfied thy justice, and through whom thou dost now manifest thyself to us as a reconciled God. Apply by thy Holy Spirit thine own most precious gift. In vain is it held forth to us, unless thou dost give the disposition to receive it. Make us willing to submit ourselves to the proposals of thy mercy and grace. Let us know Christ, not only as a Saviour, but as our Saviour. Let us not only be persuaded by the authority of thy word, that he is able and willing to save unto the uttermost; but let us be assured, that he is able and willing to save us. And being justified freely by thy grace, may we be sanctified fully by thy Spirit. Having been shown the good way of admission to thy favour, O grant, that what brings peace, may bring purity to our souls. Let a sense of our unspeakable obligation be expressed by doing what thou the Lord our God dost require of us. Whilst we bring all our doings, as well as all our sins, to the foot of the cross, and look for acceptance only through his accepted sacrifice, who was there wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, may we take thy law as a rule of life, and may we be humbled and quickened by the knowledge that it is exceeding broad. May all our intercourse and transactions with others this day, be regulated by the scripture maxims of justice, integrity, and truth. Let a spirit of forbearance and forgiveness manifest itself, under whatever provocation we may suffer; even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us. Teach us to bear each other's burdens, and so to fulfil the law of Christ. And thus by thy grace let us seek to prove, by an evidence which none can gainsay nor resist, that by faith we do not make void but establish the law. Especially, do thou dispose and enable us, we beseech thee, to walk humbly with our God. May a sense of sin; a feeling of dependence; and the weight of those obligations of gratitude under which thou hast placed us, press us down, and keep us lowly; so that we may know in our experience, that he who walketh humbly, walketh surely. And, when we remember that thou art with us; that it is our honour and our privilege to walk with thee, O let the solemn but animating thought, stimulate us to duty, sustain us under temptation, and be a sweet solace in the hour of tribulation and sorrow. May the knowledge of thy revealed will, with which we are favoured and comforted, be

extended to the whole family of man. Let all whom we should bear upon our spirits before thee, receive the blessings we desire and supplicate for ourselves; and all that we would ask, is for the sake of Christ Jesus, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIX. 11.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION II.

REMARKS.

Of the seven epistles, addressed immediately by Christ to the seven churches of Asia, four are contained in this chapter. They are ushered in to our reverend attention and regard, by the solemn views they present of the character of their Author, and of our own interest in the admonitions and warnings they convey. Our exalted Lord and King, manifests himself by different, but appropriate representations, to each of the several churches. To that of Ephesus, as exercising a minute and special guardianship over the condition and affairs of his church; watching the purity and lustre, or marking the growing dimness of the light which he had kindled; a representation fitted to give the utmost weight to the approval he expresses of the soundness and steadfastness of their faith; to impart a deep solemnity to the rebuke he administers to the declining ardour of their love; and to the threatening he denounces, to withdraw the privileges they had failed to improve. To the church in Smyrna he makes himself known as the First and the Last, a description that can only be justly appropriated by the one living and true God; and at the same time alludes to his humiliation unto death, and his glorious resurrection; a view of his character, suited to sustain and encourage them under their tribulations and sufferings, the measure and duration of which were appointed by one who could fully sympathize with them, and from which he was able in due time to give them a joyful deliverance. To the church at Pergamos, he describes himself as having the sharp sword with two edges; thus manifesting his power at once to conquer the wicked one, in the midst of whose usurped empire that church was situated, and to punish and overthrow those, who, professing to be among the number of his people, corrupted or perverted the truth. To the church in Thyatira he addresses himself as the Son of God, whose eyes are like unto a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass; a representation at once of his omniscience and purity, which could not fail to convince that church, that while he did not overlook their faith and patience, he knew and hated the false doctrines and evil practices with which they were chargeable.

While there is thus an appropriate character in which Christ represents himself to each of those churches, there is much and solemn instruction con-

veyed to us in his addresses to them all. His observation of their state is special and minute. Not only is open heresy and defection detected, but no languor or decay is too incipient, no seed or element of evil is too latent, no form of delusion and sin is too specious or subtle, to escape the notice of his all-seeing eye. His epistles denote keen and searching discrimination. He distinguishes between the most imposing counterfeits and true grace, with a certainty equal to that with which he shall at last divide the sheep from the goats. Candour and kindness no less distinguish these solemn addresses to the churches. He pronounces no universal censure, and no sweeping condemnation. He recognises and approves whatever is right and praiseworthy in their condition, marks what is wanting, and denounces only what is amiss. Nor can we at the same time fail to observe, that he speaks the language of holy strictness and stern severity. He is jealous of the purity and truth of his nature. His glory will he not give to another, neither his praise to graven images; and his threatenings against those churches, in case of continued impenitence, to remove their candlestick, and to fight against them with the sword of his mouth, have long ago received a sad fulfilment. Yet he speaks too, in the animating language of encouragement and hope, to such as by his grace shall be enabled to overcome. The fruit of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God; an everlasting exemption from the second death; the hidden manna, the white stone, the morning star, are among the blessings and rewards that shall crown the conqueror. 'He that hath an ear, therefore, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.'

With that Lord and Judge who addresses them we have to do. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His omniscience, purity, justice, and truth are unchanged and unchangeable. He here, therefore, speaks to us with an admonitory voice, to search and try our ways, to repent of our departures from the simplicity of faith, and the purity of life he demands, and to maintain the conflict like good soldiers in the Christian warfare, that by his strength we may overcome.

PRAYER.

Thou God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we rejoice to know, that it hath pleased thee, that in him should all fullness dwell. We bless thee, that while he is raised to universal dominion, he exercises a special superintendence and control over the affairs of his spiritual kingdom. Thou exalted Saviour, who art head over all things to thy church, having all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit dwelling in thee, and power to dispense them in their utmost perfection and variety, unto thee would we desire to lift up our souls. Give us, we pray thee, the spirit of repentance. Enable us to review with deep humility, the sins and defections with which we stand chargeable before thee; and realizing thy presence, whose eyes are as a flame

of fire, let us be humbled when we reflect, that if our own hearts condemn us, thou art greater than our hearts and knowest all things. Let the love of God, we beseech thee, be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us, and let the existence of that divine principle be manifested by its increasing prevalence and power. Keep us from yielding to the causes of fainting and weariness in the Christian life to which we are liable; nor ever suffer us to subject ourselves to the rebuke incurred, by departing from our first love. Bless us with the purity of heart which shall fit us to see God; and from the fountain thus made pure, may there ever flow the streams of a new and holy obedience. Implant and perfect within us all the graces of the spiritual life, and then wilt thou look with divine complacency upon thine own work in our souls. May we be distinguished for our labour and patience; for that poverty of spirit which maketh truly rich; for a firm adherence to our Christian profession, whatever dangers or persecutions may arise; for our charity, and service, and faith. Amid the struggles and the warfare in which we are engaged, when the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, when Satan tempts, when the world allures, God of our salvation, give us to look unto Jesus with a simple faith, who for our sakes hath overcome, and beckons us to follow his footsteps, and calls us to share the fruits of his victory. Thou God of our lives, we give thee thanks for thy sustaining providence, exercised towards us during the past day, and the week that is now brought to a close. We would betake ourselves, with all the sins which memory records and conscience condemns, with the sins of ignorance and those which we have forgotten; we would bring them all to the purifying fountain thou hast opened, and to which thou invitest us to apply. O cleanse us from all our pollutions. Let ours be the peace that arises, not from sins being forgotten, but from its being forgiven and washed away. Watch over us during the helpless hours of repose; and should we arise to another sabbath of the Son of man, fit us, and all thy servants and people for its solemn duties, that its services may promote in us and in them the qualities that are pleasing in thy sight, and that prepare for the rest of heaven, through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

FIFTIETH WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXXIX.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CXXXIX.

REMARKS.

In this sublime composition, which seems to be a solemn appeal to God upon the part of the psalmist, that he was innocent of the traitorous designs alleged against him, we are presented with the most exalted views of the divine omnipresence and omniscience. In a succession of the loftiest thoughts that were ever embodied in the language of mortals, the inspired writer describes the exact and intimate knowledge of all things possessed by the great object of his worship. Every movement of the body, every forming thought and rising emotion before it finds utterance in speech, the most hidden motive, the most secret purpose, the most private act, is fully open to the eye of God. With a feeling of awe, mingled with that of exultation, he celebrates the presence of Jehovah, pervading and filling the universe he has made. There is no escape from his special and searching observation. Heaven is filled with his glory; the grave cannot cover from his sight; the invisible world is open to his view. Though darting with the rapidity of a sunbeam to the outskirts of creation, the fugitive spirit finds that God is there. The shades of deepest darkness cannot protect from his notice; but the night shineth as the day. Regulating the gradual process by which the human frame, so wondrous in its texture, is curiously wrought and fashioned, he equally mingles with the inmost workings of the Spirit that inhabits it.

How alarming and distasteful soever such a contemplation must be to the unrenewed soul, it is full of comfort to the devout spirit of the psalmist. Every returning morning brings fresh delight in the consciousness that his God was near. He appeals to omniscience that he had no fellowship of purpose or of spirit with the cruel and ungodly, with whose alliance he had been accused. And above all, he desires to lay open his heart to the inspection of infinite purity, that whatever was sinful might be removed, that he might be wholly conformed to the divine will, and guided in the way everlasting.

This view of the omniscience of God may well fill us with adoration and gratitude on account of his forbearance and patience towards the children of men; that, although he knows every sin of purpose and of feeling, as well as of conduct, which pollutes the human character; pollution which, were it in the case of any of us known to our fellow-men, would cover us with shame, and which must be infinitely odious in his sight, he still suspends the execution of his wrath, permits us to breathe the air of this his world, and to hope for his mercy. How favourable the influence which this affecting doctrine would have, were it practically realized, in deterring from sin, and quickening in the path of obedience! How would it rebuke hypocrisy, and encourage sin-

cerity and truth! How would it support the mind under calumny and reproach, and strike terror into the heart of the perpetrator of secret wickedness, as well as unnerve the arm of the ruthless oppressor!

For the purpose of Christian edification too, the great truth which this psalm so impressively exhibits may be made subservient to the comfort of the returning backslider. How widely soever he may have gone astray, though he may have sullied his Christian reputation, belied his profession, denied his Lord, if blessed with a Spirit of repentance, and conscious of returning love, he can still make the appeal, 'Lord, thou knowest all things.' Others may doubt the reality of my repentance, question the sincerity of my tears; I cannot convince them, for they have no access to the consciousness of my bosom; but thou knowest the frame of my spirit, the grace with which thou hast blessed me, and wilt thou not accept that which is thine own? Would we be humbled in the dust before God, let us ponder the solemn truth elucidated in this psalm. Alas! how dismal the contrast presented between the purity of him whose character it describes, and the pollution that stains our hearts! and yet his eye rests upon each of us, as if each of us were the only objects of his inspection. Let but the consciousness of his invisible presence exist within us, and then should we repent and abhor ourselves in dust and ashes. Would we be encouraged to pray, let us reflect that he is here to teach us to pray, to search out and cleanse away our sins, to anticipate our wants and desires, to hear and answer our supplications.

PRAYER.

Inspire us, O Lord, with reverence and godly fear when we would presume to approach the majesty of heaven. If at all times thou God seest us, and if our inmost thoughts are at all times open to the inspection of thine eye, let us remember that it becometh us more especially to realize thy spiritual presence, when we come before thee as worshippers, and solicit thy notice in the language of prayer. Let the impressive contemplation of thy character, as the all-seeing and all-present God, brought before our minds in the portion of thy word which we have been reading together, be blessed by thee for our conviction and comfort. Till thou dost thyself, by thy Holy Spirit, enable us justly to appreciate and rightly to feel this solemn truth, it will produce no salutary effect; we will still seek to hide ourselves from thy presence; the truth concerning thee will fill with sullen dislike, not with holy fear; it will inspire terror, but will not awaken confidence. Give us, therefore, we pray thee, to know thee as our reconciled Father in Christ Jesus the Son of thy love. May ours be the feelings towards thee of the children of thine own redeemed and adopted family. May we rejoice in the continual and conscious presence of our Father in heaven. Remembering that thou

understandest our thoughts afar off, let us be watchful over the spirit of our minds. Knowing that thou possessest our reins, may we be on our guard against all dissimulation, and have grace to serve thee in sincerity and truth; and may we be filled with deep self-abasement when we think that thou settest our iniquity before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. When temptation assails, when corruption struggles for the mastery, let us maintain the conflict as seeing thee who art invisible. To the voice of sinful allurements may our reply ever be, Shall we do this great evil and sin against God? May we walk with thee, receiving the fulfilment of the promise, that we shall know, if we follow on to know the Lord. And as we advance in our pilgrimage, may we find in the presence of a covenant God a support under every trial, and a consolation in the season of bereavement and affliction. And especially, in the duties of this thine own day, the light of which thou hast made to cheer our dwelling, may we realize thy presence in the sanctuary. May the blessed Saviour preside by the power of his Spirit over the ordinances he has appointed. May he lead his people, by the ministry of his commissioned servants, among the green pastures and the still waters, by which their spiritual nature shall be refreshed and matured. May we and all our fellow-worshippers be impressed with the solemn thought, that thou dost mark the frame of mind, as well as the outward deportment, of every one who approaches thy courts. And whether in the exercises of devotion, or in listening to the truths of thy word, give us grace to worship thee in spirit and in truth, and thus to worship thee with acceptance through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Our Father who art in heaven, &c.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXI.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CXL. CXXI. CXXII.

REMARKS.

These several psalms seem to have been indited during a time of trial and persecution which David suffered, and which included a considerable period of his life. Nor is it wonderful that so large a portion of the divine record, designed as it is for the instruction and support of the believer in a world of tribulation, should be employed to describe the workings of the devout mind in the season of suffering and disquietude. Among other important particulars which these psalms suggest, they teach

us, 1st, That it is the privilege of the believer to pour all his anxieties and cares into the ear of God. He has an ever present, powerful, sympathizing, and unchanging friend. To him he is not only permitted but disposed to make known his whole case. Having received the Spirit of adoption, the child of God delights to unbosom all his perplexities and sorrows to his Father in heaven. It is said of John's disciples, after they had buried their master, who had been beheaded by the command of a cruel tyrant, that 'they went and told Jesus;' a similar impulse brings to Jesus still. When the wicked sharpen their tongues; when they hide their snares and spread their nets for his feet; when the most dismal calamities overtake him, and the bones of his adherents and friends are scattered at the grave's mouth, the believer tells it all to his Saviour and God, at once acknowledging his providence, and seeking his sympathy, direction, and aid, in the time of need. It is one evidence of affliction being sanctified when it brings near to God. The passage instructs us, 2d, That true prayer is eager and importunate. 'Deliver me;' 'Lord, I cry unto thee;' 'Attend to my cry;' 'Bring my soul out of prison,' are some of the expressions here employed, powerfully denoting the utmost intensity of desire, and the earnestness of supplication. How solemn the rebuke which such language administers to the cold and formal worshipper! A sense of weakness, destitution, and danger, will ever find utterance in strong crying, with tears, to him who is able to help. Peter, when about to be swallowed up by the devouring waves, cried out, 'Lord, save me, I perish.' And when we think of the consequences of being denied God's interposition in our behalf, does not the consideration justify the utmost earnestness in imploring it? If it may not be said of us, Ye receive not because ye ask not; may it not justly be said, Ye receive not, because ye ask amiss? 3d. We are also taught that a desire to be freed from all sin characterizes the spiritual worshipper. That the psalmist might be preserved from offending by his words or his conduct, amid the provocations he suffered, is the subject of his earnest prayer. His request is that God would set a watch before his mouth, that he would prevent the inward thought of evil. Nay, such was his anxiety to know and to avoid every form of sin to which he might be tempted, that he would regard the enlightened rebuke, the sharp reproof of the righteous, as a softening and healing oil. We too should seek especially to be delivered from those sins to which our outward trials may furnish an occasion, or which they may tempt us to commit. Grace in the soul can never exist in union with cherished corruption. The desire of every devout mind is to be cleansed from secret faults, as well as delivered from presumptuous sins. It further appears, 4th, from the psalms we have read, that some hope of ultimate deliverance will usually cheer the pious soul, even during the season of darkness and affliction. This hope is repeatedly expressed by the psalmist. In the midst of all the persecutions and reproach to which he refers, he expresses his confidence that the Lord would maintain the cause of the afflicted; 'the up-

right,' says he, 'shall dwell in thy presence;' 'the righteous shall compass me about, for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.' Amid all the darkness and mystery which envelop the dispensations of God, never let us lose sight of the encouraging truth, that verily it shall be well with the righteous. Nor let the convinced and humbled sinner ever be filled with despondency or despair. His abasement is the pledge of his exaltation. As the cross conducts to the crown, as the night of death precedes the dawn of immortality, so must we die unto sin that we may live unto righteousness. And, finally, we are instructed that the triumph of the wicked shall be short. While every feeling of personal malice and revenge will be anxiously suppressed in the devout breast, the friends of truth and godliness cannot but rejoice with the psalmist in the prospect of the final prevalence of those principles which will bring glory to God and happiness to the universe. Although this state of things implies the overthrow and destruction of obstinate sinners, as well as of persecutors and oppressors, the judicial infliction by which the wicked shall fall into their own nets, even into deep pits, that they rise not up again, shall not interrupt the happiness of the redeemed. 'All nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest.'

PRAYER.

Great and marvellous are all thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints. Who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy? O thou who desirest truth in the inward parts, do thou purify our souls from every pollution. Keep us not only from an open violation of thy righteous commands, but incline not our hearts to any evil thing. Let all old things be made to pass away, and all things as to the views, aims, desires, and actings of our minds, to become new; and from the fountain of a heart, purified by thy grace, may there flow forth the streams of a holy obedience. Inspire us with that hope which is an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast; and through whatever course of discipline thou mayest be pleased to conduct us, however painful to the flesh, or how great soever the exercise of self-denial it may involve, we would desire to submit ourselves in a humble and child-like spirit, in the blessed expectation that thou wilt make it the means of fitting us for the inheritance of the saints in light. Encourage us to maintain the conflict with sin, whether within or around us. Let us remember that although the warfare may be sharp, the victory is sure; and as thou art the source of our strength in fighting the good fight of faith, let us be disposed to ascribe to thee the glory of our success. Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our

Lord. For the purpose of moulding our souls into an entire conformity to thy blessed will, O thou who alone canst render the ordinances of thine appointment subservient to the great purposes of spiritual edification, give efficacy to the word of thy grace spoken to us this day. May thy word be mighty and powerful in our case and in that of our fellow-worshippers, in promoting all the gracious designs for which it has been proclaimed from heaven. Let not our sins and manifold provocations; let not the pollution which taints our holy duties, obstruct the blessed influence which, by the power of thy Spirit, it is fitted to exert. May its impression be rendered abiding and practical; nor suffer us to be like the man who, beholding his natural face in a glass, goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But grant that the truth as it is in Jesus may be so continually present to the eye of our faith, that it may transform us into his image, from one degree of glory to another, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Exercise thy guardian care over us through the silent watches of the night. If it is thy will that we should arise to the life and blessings of a new day, when we awake may we be still with thee. May the duties of the sabbath exert a salutary and sanctifying influence upon our minds during all the intercourse of the week; and enable us to prove the difference that there is between those who live unto God, and those who live unto themselves. And unto the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, be all the glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XIV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—MICAH VII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The first six verses contain a humiliating account of the moral degeneracy into which the whole nation had fallen. Good men were so scarce that, compared with the wicked, they resembled the scanty gleanings of the vintage. Iniquity alone seemed to abound, and on all hands it presented itself in its most appalling forms. Avarice, deceit, cruelty, selfishness, bribery, were indulged by all ranks without restraint, and without remorse. Justice, like a marketable commodity, was openly bought and sold; for princes and judges, the ruler and the ruled, were equally ready to deal in bribes, and to take reward against the innocent. In the gratification of these evil passions, the dearest ties of relationship were sacrilegiously violated; for the wife was ready to betray the husband, and the son to dishonour the

father. There remained no friend in whom any one could trust; for the worst of a man's foes might arise from among the men of his own house.

This was an excessive state of degeneracy; but notwithstanding its prevalence, there was still a few in the land who remained steadfast in the service of God. Like those in the days of Elijah who refused to bow the knee to Baal, these faithful worshippers formed a very precious remnant; and as constituting the proper representatives of the church, they are introduced at ver. 7. as taking comfort in the prospect that the Lord would, in due time, interpose in their behalf, and deliver them from all the wickedness, and all the troubles by which they were surrounded. In the confident expectation of this they counselled their enemies, the heathen nations that sought to waste the heritage of God, not to triumph over them, as if they should never regain the freedom and prosperity they were destined for a time to forfeit. For a certain season they would be condemned to sit in darkness, as a just punishment for the sins of the nation, but when the Lord had exacted what he considered to be right in vindication of his authority, he would return in mercy to his ancient people. This their enemies would behold with confusion, for then they themselves would be overtaken with fearful retribution, even to 'be trodden down as the mire of the streets.' Merited punishment would overtake the enemies of the church, and the walls of Jerusalem would be rebuilt, when to this the city of their fathers, the children of the captivity would return from the land of Assyria, and all other places whether they had been scattered.

Looking forward to these happy events, which the prophet was fully assured would come to pass, he humbly entreats the Lord, at ver. 14, to feed his people, and to this the Lord is represented as returning an answer by declaring, that, as in their former deliverance out of Egypt, he would once more show them wonderful things, which would wholly confound the nations around, and especially those who had been the oppressors in the times of their captivity. As all these revolutions were to take place through the Lord's great mercy to his people, notwithstanding their many provocations, the prophet was led very justly to exclaim, 'Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage!' Great as the blessings were which the church expected to derive from the Lord, she might still confidently hope that none of them would be withheld, for they had been promised by him, and not one of his promises will he ever forget.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. The enjoyment of the richest means of grace affords no security in itself against indulgence in the greatest wickedness. 2. The fearful state of moral degeneracy into which the Jewish nation so frequently fell, abundantly showed that they were not chosen by God because of 'the uprightness of their heart.' 3. There is no security for faithfulness and continued tenderness of affection in the dearest relative except religious principle sanctifies the union of friends. 4. God often employs wicked men to

chastise his own people, and when their work is done, they are next brought under his awful judgments for their cruel oppressions. 5. All our troubles arise from our sins, and we should readily acknowledge that they justly awake the indignation of God. 6. Our hope of salvation is in the pardoning mercy of God through Jesus Christ. 7. The security possessed by the church, that God will not forsake her amidst her many provocations, consists in his own gracious covenant made with the Son of his love.

PRAYER.

O God, we desire to approach the footstool of thy throne with the deepest humility, because we know that in thy sight we are naturally polluted and vile. We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away. Like a deceitful bow we have all turned aside, so that there is none righteous, no not one; we have become all unprofitable. We desire, O our God, to consider attentively the great degeneracy of our nature, that we may see what abundant cause there is for our being humbled in thy sight. Thou hast shown us, in what thou hast recorded of the history of thy church, how desperately wicked men may become amidst the greatest outward advantages. In the deeds of the ungodly, by whom we are surrounded, we fully recognise the corruption of our common nature, and we are satisfied from our own experience that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. We are all ready to despise the kindest warnings; to reject the most salutary counsels; to spurn from us the richest offers of mercy. O Lord, do thou in thy goodness enable us to deplore this our fallen and helpless state. Lead us to perceive its misery and wretchedness, and leave us not to despair of relief, but guide us to him who is mighty to save, even to him who is both able and willing to deliver. We rejoice that thy hand has been upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. Look upon us, therefore, in the face of thine Anointed, and for his sake, do thou blot out all our iniquities. Wash us in his blood; and though our sins be red like scarlet, and like crimson, they shall be white as the snow, and white as wool. Cleanse us from all our sins, and thus prepare us for that blessed place into which nothing can enter that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie. These things we take all encouragement to ask, for verily there is no God like unto thee, who pardoneth iniquity, and who passeth by the transgression of the remnant of thine heritage. Hear the voice

of our entreaty, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom, with thee the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be everlasting praise. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXXIX. 57.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION III.

REMARKS.

Ver. 1—6. Sardis was the capital of Lydia in Asia Minor. It was much celebrated for its great wealth, and the dissolute manners of its inhabitants, but it is now reduced to the condition of presenting only a few mud huts, which are occupied by Turkish herdsmen. Within it Christianity has not so much as even a name; for no professed disciple of Jesus is found in the place, so that the church which was once there is literally dead. When Jesus here speaks of himself as having the seven Spirits of God, it may be considered as referring to his having at his disposal the gift of the Holy Ghost, who although but one undivided person in the Trinity, is spoken of in this figurative way as if he were many, in consequence of the variety of his graces and operations. The church at Sardis was appropriately reminded by its great Head of his being able to communicate this divine agent, so that it might look for the blessing, in order to awaken the many who were spiritually dead within its pale to new life and vigour. So long as they remained in this condition they were every moment exposed to danger. Hence the necessity of repentance and reformation. Nor did their case admit, safely, of any delay; for Jesus might come speedily, even as a thief in the night, to demand their final account. The consideration of this was calculated to quicken their diligence, and they had another argument, not less powerful, in the promise mentioned in ver. 5; for this they would inherit, if they came to resemble those of their neighbours who were commended as keeping their garments unspotted by the flesh; who were attempting to serve their God in holiness and purity of life.

Ver. 7—13. The epistle, in these verses, is addressed to the church in Philadelphia. This city, which is now known by a different name, still remains, and reckons about a thousand among its inhabitants who profess the Christian religion. The titles which the Saviour claims, in the epistle, are very significant. He speaks of himself as 'he that is holy,' which implies his supreme divinity; for the title, 'Holy One' pertains to God only, and this gives intimation, at the same time, of his hatred of all sin, and his love of righteousness and purity. As 'he that is true,' he exercises all faithfulness, for he is ever mindful of his promises; and in declaring that he possesses the key of David, whilst he shuts and opens at pleasure, he sets forth his prerogative to admit into his church, or to exclude from it whomsoever he sees fit. He is the supreme Governor in his own house, opening the door to whom he will, whether by the key of doc-

trine or of discipline. In the exercise of this function he had presented to the inhabitants of Philadelphia, a door of entrance into his church, by the preaching of the gospel; and after commending his faithful servants therein for all that was praise-worthy in their conduct, he urged them to maintain their stedfastness, by alluding to the honour and the blessedness he would confer on them in the mansions of eternal rest.

Ver. 14—21. The city of Laodicea has long been reduced to a mass of ruins; without inhabitant, save in so far as it is the dwelling-place of beasts of prey. The desolation that has overtaken it, is more complete than what has befallen any of the other six cities from which the seven churches of Asia derived their name. As it was the most corrupt of them all, so hath its punishment been the more signal. It was threatened with awful judgments if it did not repent. This was calculated to arouse its lukewarm professors to a sense of their danger; and farther to encourage their return to duty, they were invited to come to Jesus for the supply of every thing of which they stood in need. He was at hand for this very purpose; he was at the very door, and even importunately asking admittance, that he might go in, and hold sweet intercourse and fellowship with them. Nor was this all that those should enjoy who were ready to entertain him; for in the event of their being proclaimed victors in the end, they would be allowed to sit down with him on his throne in the kingdom of heaven.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, we draw near unto thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have access by one Spirit unto thee the Father. We rejoice to contemplate him in the ever-blessed characters in which he has revealed himself in that portion of thine own word we have now read, wherein he is made known to us as the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God. We have the assurance that in all respects he bore witness to the truth, while on earth, by which he earned the testimony that he was faithful to him who appointed him, even as Moses was faithful in all his house. He kept no part of God's counsel back, for he delighted ever to make known his will; he always rejoiced to make known the message with which he was fraught for the salvation of perishing sinners. O Lord, enable us, attentively, to consider the heavenly message with which we have thus been favoured. May the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, so that it may ever be a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path. We rejoice, O our Saviour, to look to thee as still continuing to give direction by thy word, and thy Spirit, in the church which thou hast planted and watered with thine own blood. Thou art still a witness; thou art still a leader, and a commander to the

people; for thou hast the keys of David, and shuttest, and no man openeth, and openest, and no man shutteth. O Lord, do thou, in thine abundant mercy, exercise thy prerogative in our behalf, and open the door of our hearts, that thy word may have free entrance, so that we may glorify thee in our walk and conversation. May it be rendered effectual through the Spirit in casting down every imagination; every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and in bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of thee our Lord and Saviour. O that we were brought into this state of conformity to the divine will, for then would Christ come in and sup with us; then would our fellowship be with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost. O that we had more of longing desire after such communion; but, alas, our affections are too much set on earthly things! We have too much regard for the world and its polluting pleasures; and thus, like the church of Laodicea, we are lukewarm, being neither cold nor hot. May we instantly take warning respecting the danger of continuing in such a state, and forthwith seek to love thee with all our soul, with all our heart, and with all our might. Constrain us, by thy great power, to give ourselves wholly to thy service; and may we always be ready to declare, even in the most trying circumstances in which we may be placed, that we are for thee, and not for another. Hear, O our God, these our humble petitions. Return to them an answer in peace, and all that we ask is in the name of our once crucified, but now highly exalted Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM IX. 7.

SCRIPTURE—HABAKKUK I.

REMARKS.

As the things to which Habakkuk's attention was directed at the time of writing his prophecies, were much calculated to excite grief in the pious mind, while they were to be the means of producing great misery and wretchedness among his countrymen, he alludes to them with great propriety by the expressive name of 'a burden.' In this way he designates the abounding of iniquity in the land; the triumphing of the ungodly in their wickedness; and the remarkable dispensation he anticipated in the threatening of God, who was about to employ a nation to scourge and chastise another nation, although in itself still more desperately wicked and meritorious of suffering under the afflictive judgments of heaven.

It sometimes happens that the best of men feel

themselves laid under a temptation to yield to the supposition entertained by the ungodly, that 'the way of the Lord is not equal,' Ezek. xviii. 25, and one thing which they are apt to regard as illustrating this, consists in his occasionally permitting proud and haughty sinners to enjoy prosperity, while his faithful servants are borne down by oppression. David, we find, was tempted in this way, as he informs us in Psal. lxxiii. Habakkuk also seems to have been in some measure influenced by a similar view in reference to the Chaldeans being permitted to indulge in wanton cruelty and oppression against the Jews, notwithstanding their being chosen by God to be his peculiar people: but all his difficulties arising from this source, he was enabled to surmount by what he learned was to be the fate of these enemies of his nation. They were first of all to be employed as instruments in punishing his countrymen for their numerous and aggravated sins; and when this their appointed work should be performed, then the Lord would in a signal manner bring them under condign punishment for their wanton cruelty and other heinous offences. The Jews were highly deserving of severe chastisement, for, as represented in ver. 2—4, they abounded in transgression.

This fearful state of crime was not to pass unpunished, and the destined punishment was to be inflicted by the Chaldeans, for God was to make use of them for this special purpose. The miseries which were thus destined to come upon the Jews, the prophet contemplated with considerable distress of mind; but he derived at the same time encouragement enabling him to bear up under 'the burden' of sorrow, from certain animating views of God's character, and these he notices for the consolation of others in ver. 12. Therein he speaks of God as the 'holy One,' and the very title implies that every thing that he does is free of sin and all unrighteousness. Having, even from eternity, ordained the preservation of Israel, which he made known to the patriarchs, and through them to the world, they certainly would not be allowed to 'die' or perish as a nation, notwithstanding the calamities they were to endure. The Chaldeans, fierce and destructive as they were, could not exceed the bounds set for them by Jehovah. They were no more, after all, than instruments in his hand; for 'he had ordained them for judgment, and established them for correction.' The prophet took farther comfort from contemplating God as 'of purer eyes than to behold evil,' for while this view of his character would of itself account for his bringing severe judgments on his ancient people, it was also a guarantee that their destroyers, in this case, would not escape that punishment they justly merited on account of their relentless cruelties. Confiding in this view, the prophet ventured to appeal to the Lord, as to whether he would continue silent while the wicked persecutors of the Jews destroyed and devoured the men that after all were 'more righteous than they themselves were.' In farther proof of the wickedness of these scorners, the circumstance is adverted to, that after seizing on their unfortunate captives, as if they had been catching fish, they, in a manner, idolized the means they adopted in carrying forward their

conquests, as if these had been the divinities that insured their success. In this they acted as foolishly as the fisherman would do were he formally to worship his net, and the other implements of his craft.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O God, for what thou art in thyself, and for what thou art to the children of men. Thou art glorious in holiness; thou art fearful in praises; thou art ever doing wonders. The greatness of thine acts in providence and grace, illustrate the excellence of thy wisdom, and thy power, and thy goodness. They show that thou art unsearchable in thy ways, and that thy judgments are past finding out. As King over all, thou doest whatsoever seemeth good unto thee in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. Thou alone art Governor among the nations, and in the exercise of thy sovereignty thou buildest up and thou pullest down; thou carriest away as with an overwhelming flood, and again thou bringest back, so as to cause the voice of joy and gladness to be heard in the land. All things are in thine hand, and thou doest with them according to thy pleasure; for as may best serve the great purposes of thy government, thou killest, and thou makest alive; thou bringest down to the grave, and thou bringest up again; thou makest poor, and thou makest rich; thou raisest up the poor out of the dust, and liftest up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory. We gladly acknowledge thy right to do these things, O Lord; for the pillars of the earth are thine, and thou hast set the world upon them. O Lord, do thou help us to recognize continually thy sovereignty, that we may pay more attention to the evidences that are afforded in the distresses thou bringest on the kingdoms of the earth, of thy displeasure at sin. Incline us fully to obey the invitation which bids us come and behold what desolations the Lord hath brought upon the earth. Of old thou didst in thy wrath destroy the world with a flood, and the cities of the plain with a deluge of fire. Thou hast swept from the face of the earth many of its once mightiest monarchies; for when the cup of their iniquity was full, thou didst make them drink, in punishment of their desperate wickedness, the wine of astonishment. Verily thou art a jealous God, and wilt assuredly take vengeance on all thine adversaries. Who can stand before the indignation of the Lord? who can abide the fierceness of his anger? Heavenly Father, enable us to seek freedom from all sin; for sin is the cause of all the calamities to which as in-

dividuals, or as a nation, we are exposed. Help us to take refuge in the Son of thy love, who, through his atoning sacrifice, has become to all who have faith in his righteousness, as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Thither may thy Holy Spirit induce us to flee, for it is only in the blood of the Redeemer that safety is to be found. O God, listen to these our supplications. And now unto thee the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be everlasting praise, world without end. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LXV. 5.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION IV. V.

REMARKS.

CHAP. IV. This chapter may be regarded in the light of an introduction to the prophetic part of the book of Revelation. In preparing John for recording the predictions regarding the future state of the church, which he was about to write, the Spirit favoured him with a vision or an emblematical representation of the third heavens, which is set forth in scripture as the peculiar dwelling-place of God, and of the spirits of just men made perfect. The throne which he beheld in this manner, was designed to bring into recognition the majesty and the sovereignty of God, and although he is spoken of as having been seated on this throne, yet he is not described as possessing any particular form or shape. By this we are reminded that God is without bodily parts, and therefore any description which is attempted of him must be guided by a reference to his glorious perfections, as these are displayed in his works of providence and grace. In this instance, John endeavours to produce suitable impressions of the greatness of God, by alluding to the resplendence and glory in which he was displayed, and this he describes, by saying that he who sat on the throne 'was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone.' The figurative language that is farther made use of, in delineation of the scene which was thus contemplated, is evidently constructed with the design of exalting our conceptions regarding the super-eminent glory in which Jehovah is revealed to his saints in his holy temple.

The four and twenty elders who were seen occupying seats around the throne, are generally considered to be the representatives of the church of God; and possibly there may be an allusion to the twelve tribes, and the twelve apostles, which added together, make up the number twenty-four. Along with these, there were also seen near the throne four 'beasts,' or as the phrase should be translated, 'living creatures,' full of eyes before and behind, which seem to denote their vigilance and circumspection.

These creatures, as being comparatively few, in proportion to the number of elders, and as occupying an intermediate space between the elders and the throne, seem to represent the ministers, or pastors, of the church. Their different forms may be considered to be symbolical of the different powers and dispositions for which public teachers are distinguished; some resembling the lion in courage and fortitude; some resembling the calf or ox in patience and labour; some rising superior to their neighbours in wisdom and prudence; and others, typified by the eagle, are distinguished for the heavenliness of their temper and dispositions. As a farther characteristic of the living creatures, it is said that each had six wings, and this may denote their great activity in the service of God. This interpretation is borne out by what is stated regarding the manner of their service, for it is remarked, that 'they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,' &c. They are incessantly engaged in the work of praise, and as directed and encouraged in this way, the four and twenty elders follow the example, and worship continually him who sitteth on the throne. How desirable that God's will were thus done on earth, as it is in heaven!

CHAP. V. The book which John saw in the hands of him who sat on the throne was, doubtless, the book of God's eternal decrees. Into this no mere creature can possibly look, and therefore none could be found who was fit to examine and to reveal its contents. But Jesus the Son of God, 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David,' was found duly qualified for the task. When the book was given to him for this purpose, the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders acknowledged his right to the exalted privilege by falling down before him, and proclaiming in strains of deep devotion, that he was 'worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof.' The ground, or reason, of this worthiness they attribute to his sacrificial death, whereby he washed them from their sins, and exalted them to the honour of being made kings and priests unto God. The whole inhabitants of heaven, amounting to 'ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,' are represented as celebrating the praises of the Lamb of God; and from the things that are therein ascribed to him, and the manner in which it is done, constituting, as it does, an act of solemn religious worship, the supreme deity of the Lord Jesus Christ is most explicitly acknowledged. In this we are taught to honour him even as we honour the Father.

PRAYER.

When we appear before thee, O God, at the footstool of thy throne, and thus place ourselves more immediately in thy holy presence, may we remember that we are but dust and ashes; may we remember that we are of unclean lips; that we dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, and are altogether unworthy of the privilege of addressing ourselves to thee in prayer and supplications. O that we were impressed by a

large portion of that reverence and humility with which the seraphims, who minister in the upper sanctuary, approach thy throne, when they cover their faces with their wings, and cry one to another, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. Blessed be thy great name, that we are permitted with them to draw near, and to ascribe blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. It is because thou hast sent redemption to thy folk; it is because thou hast taken them out of the deep pit and the miry clay; it is because thou hast put a new song into their mouth, even the song of salvation, that they enjoy the unspeakable privilege of celebrating thy praises, and the praises of him who gave himself a ransom for their souls. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel that he hath visited and redeemed his people; that he hath raised up an horn of salvation for them in the house of his servant David. Lord, help us by the power of thy Holy Spirit to make this wonderful deliverance the unfailing theme of our admiring gratitude and praise, so that we may resemble those blessed spirits in the heavenly world, whose constant employment it is to acknowledge thee and thy Son for the accomplished redemption. All thy works praise thee, but thou hast magnified thy name above all thy works, in the wonderful means thou hast devised for delivering thy chosen ones from going down to the pit, and for restoring them to the enjoyments of Immanuel's land. In the great scheme of salvation, all thy perfections are glorified, for mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other. The demands of thy holy law have all been answered in the perfect obedience and atoning death of thy dear Son, so that thou art just whilst justifying him who believeth in Jesus. O God, may we all be among those who thus believe to the saving of the soul. In seeking for pardon and acceptance, may we plead nothing except the merits of the Saviour's all-prevailing sacrifice. His blood cleanseth from all sin, and his blood alone can accomplish this. We, therefore, desire to have our sole dependence on it for justification in thy sight. Forbid that any of us should be found trusting to his own righteousness, for by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified. And may we, in receiving Christ, walk worthy of him, and give no occasion to any one to speak evil of our profession. O Lord, guide us by thy Spirit, for it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps. Be our God and

our Guide even unto death, and then our exceeding great reward; and all that we ask is in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—HABAKKUK II.

REMARKS.

In the last part of the preceding chapter the prophet expostulates with God in reference to the triumphant success of the Chaldeans, notwithstanding their treachery, wickedness, and idolatry. They were permitted to devour those who were more righteous than themselves. The prophet now places himself in that situation in which he was to learn the mind of the Lord, and receive an answer to his expostulations. The answer of the Lord is worthy of the most serious attention, for it points out to godly men what is their duty when the providential dispensations of the Most High appear involved in perplexity and obscurity. The vision, or revelation, now given, was to be set down in language so plain and simple, that it might be easily apprehended by the most cursory perusal. The certainty of its accomplishment is distinctly declared; and the people of God are directed to wait in the exercise of true faith till the proper time should arrive. The punishment of the Chaldeans might be postponed; but it would not be forgotten, for nations, as such, can only be punished in this world for their iniquities. The revelation begins at the fifth verse, and is directed against the king of Babylon, who may be considered as the representative of the inhabitants of his kingdom. The threatenings are denounced against them for their pride, their insatiable ambition and covetousness, for their cruelty, drunkenness, and idolatry. These were the vices not only of their kings, but also of a large portion of the people, and of these the history of that people furnishes many examples. The pride of Nebuchadnezzar, and its punishment, are well known, and require no illustration. The ambition of the Chaldeans, and their covetousness, form a prominent feature in the character of several of their kings, especially in that of Shalmanezzer, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon. Their cruelty is discovered in the treatment of the nations which they conquered, in depriving them of their wealth, and in reducing them to a state of the most abject slavery. The history of Belshazzar is well calculated to illustrate the habits of drunkenness which were common to the king and the people; and the image on the plain of Dura, and the praises bestowed upon the gods of gold, silver, wood, and stone, by Belshazzar, his princes, his wives, and his concubines, present an unquestionable proof of the idolatry which universally prevailed. Woes are denounced against all these sins, of which the Chaldeans, here represented by their king, are found guilty. Utter ruin as a nation was to be the certain consequence of their

many vices. Those who had been oppressed would rise against their oppressors; and those who had been spoiled would spoil in their turn. Their covetousness would be followed with shame; and the cities on which they had brought misery and ruin, would testify against them. Their drunkenness was actually followed by the overthrow of the monarchy, and by the transference of the empire to the Medes and Persians; and they were practically taught that there is no profit in idols, and no deliverance in a god in which is no breath.

As we meditate on these things, and observe the woes which were here denounced put into execution, let us contemplate the evil nature of sin, which, if persisted in, will be visited with the divine indignation, both in this world and in that which is to come.

PRAYER.

Most gracious and most merciful God, we, who are but dust and ashes before thee, would this morning draw near to thy throne of grace, and would bless and magnify thy name for all the goodness which thou makest to pass before us. We have laid ourselves down and slept, we have awaked, for thou the Lord hast sustained us. We would be thankful that, during the past night, while we were unconscious of what was passing around us, no evil has befallen us, and no plague has come near our dwelling. And now that we have opened our eyes to the light of another day, may we be enabled to begin the duties of this day with God, and be pleased to lift on us the light of thy countenance. O thou who art the refuge and dwelling-place of thy people in all generations; O thou who art not unmindful of the dwellings of Jacob, be the God of this family; and whatever others do, may we be enabled to serve thee the Lord. We acknowledge the power which the things of this world maintain over us; we confess the proneness of our hearts to evil; the vain thoughts that pass through our minds, and the tendency that we feel to permit the cares and perplexities of life to choke the seed of the word that may be sown in our hearts; and we now earnestly pray that our sins may be washed away in the blood of Christ, and pour out upon us thy Spirit, that we may obtain strength to overcome the corruptions of our hearts, and our tendency to all that is sinful. Help us to discharge all our relative duties as they are laid down in thy holy word; and may we have the grace that we need to enable us to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. As we go forth this day to our ordinary occupations, may we carry along with us the principles of the gospel, and may our conduct be regulated by that wisdom which cometh down from above. Preserve us through all our duties from violating any of thy holy commandments,

and from committing any gross sin. May we be sober and temperate, just and honest. May we be desirous to cultivate truth and sincerity, so that we may not be found to change, even though we must speak to our own disadvantage. O that thy blessing may accompany the portion of thy word which has now been read, and may our souls profit by those lessons which the bible teaches. May we be convinced that the ways of sin lead to destruction, and that everlasting misery and ruin are the certain portion of the wicked, and of them that know not God. Teach us to live separate from the world, while we take part in its business and pursuits; and may we be enabled to watch over ourselves with a godly jealousy. Sanctify to us any crosses, disappointments, and afflictions, with which we may be visited, and preserve us from falling into the sin of murmuring and repining at thy holy providence. We pray for the sick and the distressed, the sorrowful and the dying. Comfort their souls, be a present help in their trouble, and prepare the dying for their awful change. Build up thy church in the midst of us, and accompany the preaching of the gospel with an abundant blessing. Pardon the sins of this approach unto thee; and all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRaise—Psalm LXXXVII.

Scripture—Revelation VI.

REMARKS.

This chapter contains an account of the opening of the seals of that book, which of all in heaven and in earth, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of Jesse, was the only one able to loose. When he opened the first seal, the voice of one of the living creatures was heard; and if we take them in the order mentioned in the 4th chapter, this must have been the voice of the lion. It is known to be very majestic, and is therefore spoken of as resembling the strength and majesty of thunder. The first seal may be viewed as a representation of the preaching of the gospel, and its gradual diffusion over the world. The emblem is a white horse, indicating purity; his rider is armed with a bow, and his progress is distinguished by conquest. The voice of the lion may signify the uncompromising firmness with which the gospel was preached during the first ages of the Christian church. The opening of the second seal shows for its emblem a red horse, and refers to the opposition which was made to the gospel, and to the persecution of its ministers and adherents by civil authority. The voice of the second living creature is that of a calf, humble and subdued;

and perhaps it points to the meekness and patience with which the servants of the gospel endured the sufferings which were inflicted by their cruel persecutors. The opening of the third seal presents a black horse, which may be generally considered as an emblem of disaster. From what the rider held in his hand, as well as from the proclamation that was made, this was to be a period of famine, when men should eat their bread by weight, and drink their water by measure. The voice of the third living creature was that of a man, by which wisdom and high attainments are denoted; and the history of that time proves that the ministers of religion were remarkable for their knowledge and learning. The opening of the fourth seal is accompanied with the voice of the fourth living creature, which is the flying eagle; and as the eagle is a bird of prey, it has been considered as indicating something unfavourable in the character of the ministers of the gospel; but others, with more probability, view it as indicating the exalted devotions of the servants of Christ, as the eagle's flight exceeds that of every other bird. The emblem is a pale horse, with Death for a rider, and hell, or the state of the dead, following. This foretells the pestilence and dreadful mortality, as well as the woful disasters, which occurred from the reign of Commodus to that of Dioclesian. The fifth seal refers to the martyrs who were slain for the testimony of Jesus. Their cry was, that the Lord most holy and true should avenge their blood; and we learn from this that vengeance belongs only to God, and the cry of the martyrs is to be resolved into zeal for the honour of God. They were called up from the altar, under which they lay as bleeding sacrifices, and they received white robes, and were informed that it would be yet for a short period till the iniquities of the persecutors should be filled up in the blood of the martyrs, who were to lay down their lives for the truth. The opening of the sixth seal was accompanied with an earthquake; a symbol, in the language of prophecy, of a revolution, either civil or religious. The event to which this seal points is the overthrow of pagan worship, and the establishment of Christianity over the Roman empire. The reign of idolatry terminated under Constantine the Great. Its sun, the false gods of the heathen, became black as sackcloth of hair; the moon, the adherents of idolatry, became as blood; the stars, the heathen priests, fell to rise no more. It is thus history teaches us the fulfilment of prophecy, and affords additional means of strengthening and establishing the faith of Christians.

PRAYER.

We, O God, fall down before thee, who art the former of our bodies, the preserver of our lives, and our constant and unwearied benefactor. To thee we offer the tribute of our thanksgiving and praise for the mercy and loving-kindness which we have this day experienced, and for all the proofs of thy goodness which we have received. Thou hast bestowed the health and strength which were necessary for going through our daily occupations. Thou hast fed us with

the food which was convenient for us. Thou hast preserved us from dangers which were ready to overwhelm us. Thou hast enabled us to resist temptations which the corruptions of our hearts rendered powerful; and now would we rejoice in thee the Lord, and unite together in blessing thy name for all our benefits. We appear before thee with shame and confusion of face when we remember the sins of which we have this day been guilty before thee, who art infinitely holy. How many sinful thoughts have passed through our minds since the morning light! How frequently have we spoken unadvisedly with our lips! and we have now to lament in thy presence that our conversation this day has not been with grace seasoned with salt. How many sinful actions have we this day committed, and how many duties have we neglected to perform! We have been transgressing thy holy law, while we were unconscious of the transgression; and many of our sins have passed away without a moment's observation. O enter not into judgment with us; visit us not with the punishment which we deserve. We pray that thou mayest now lead us to that fountain which is opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness. Say to each one of us, Thy sins be forgiven thee. We would look to Christ, and with the eye of our faith; and may we practically understand that he is the only way of access to thee our God; that he is the only channel of communication between heaven and earth, and that through him alone all temporal and spiritual blessings flow to the children of men. Lead us, holy Father, to the Lord Jesus Christ, and may we find that in him is our peace. We would desire at this time to express our gratitude and thankfulness to thee, that thou, O God, hast called us from our various employments to enjoy a period of rest. O that we may be made duly sensible of the wise arrangements of thy gracious providence, which has appointed a time of rest to succeed that of labour, and to afford us an opportunity for refreshing and invigorating our bodies. Give us this night the rest and refreshment which thou hast promised to thy chosen. Enable us to repose on Christ as our only rest; and when we lay down our heads on our pillows, may our sleep be sweet. We look to thee for the protection that we need through the silent watches of this night; and may we rise in the morning in thy fear. Let those who are dear to us, wherever they are, be the objects of thy special protection. Bring them into thy sheepfold, and make them thine own. We pray for the church of Christ, strengthen her stakes, and

lengthen her cords. May the preaching of the gospel receive the blessing from on high, and do thou prosper thy work in the midst of us. May thy blessing rest upon this house. Be our God, our guide, and our exceeding great reward. Forgive our sins; and all that we ask is for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXV. 6.

SCRIPTURE—HABAKKUK III.

REMARKS.

The title of this chapter, contained in the first verse, leads us to look for a composition of a devotional character, embracing a great variety of topics. The prophet had received the revelation, in which the fate of the Chaldeans was distinctly intimated, and knowing the sins with which his own countrymen were chargeable, and perhaps impressed with a sense of his own unworthiness, he declares that he was afraid. Can any man, who feels that he is a sinner, observe judgments about to fall on the ungodly without some degree of apprehension and alarm? If others deserve punishment on account of sin, well may we inquire, what is there in us to merit the divine favour. Hence the appropriate prayer, 'revive thy work in the midst of the years.' At the time when Habakkuk prophesied, which was about the beginning of the Babylonish captivity, the priest and the people had equally degenerated, and there was need for a revival of vital religion. This prayer is well suited to every period in the history of the church of Christ. In her present state she has many spots, and wrinkles, and blemishes; often is the divine wrath well merited, but in the midst of them all he refreshes and revives his people, and never fails to show them mercy. We have thus great encouragement to earnest prayer. In the next portion of the chapter the glory and majesty of God are celebrated in language that is strikingly sublime. First, we have an account of his appearance on mount Sinai, as if he came from Paran in the immediate neighbourhood, or from Teman, the country of Edom, at a greater distance. The effulgence of his glory was manifest, for beams, here styled horns, came out of his head, and darted in all directions, and the greatness of his power was veiled by his indescribable brightness. Next the prophet alludes to the pestilence and other diseases, which like burning coals devoured the adversaries of true religion, and became the instruments of Jehovah's vengeance. This seems to be an allusion to the plagues with which God had visited the inhabitants of Egypt. In ver. 6, he refers to the division of the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel, both by Moses and Joshua, the expulsion of the Canaanites, and the overthrow of their kings, and princes, and mighty men; and in all these events we have an assurance that his covenant is unchange-

able, and that his mercy endureth to all generations. God's dealings with the Canaanites struck terror into the hearts of the surrounding nations, so that the people of that part of Arabia, called Cushan, and Midian, were in deep distress. They had heard of the wonders done at the Red sea, and at the crossing of the Jordan. The trembling of mount Sinai, the sun and moon standing still at the command of Joshua, proclaimed the power of him, who had declared himself to be the God of his people. When the prophet thus brings to the remembrance of his countrymen God's mighty works for the deliverance of their fathers, he, at the same time, teaches them a most useful and important lesson. If they believed all these things, they must also believe that it is the same God who is dealing with them, that delivered their ancestors out of all their difficulties. Here, then, is ample ground for the exercise of faith. They might be slaves, and destitute in a foreign land, but the Lord is the joy of his people, and he will not forsake them that put their trust in him. Let us apply this lesson to our own hearts, and let us still put our trust in God, who is alone able to give us comfort.

PRAYER.

Holy and ever-blessed God, we humble ourselves, this morning, at the footstool of thy throne, and acknowledge thy great condescension in permitting us to approach thy holy presence. We would desire, at this time, to think of all thy mighty works, and of all the wonders which thou hast wrought for thy people's deliverance. Thou causedst thy name to be feared; thou broughtest terror upon the nations, and madest the people to tremble. Even in the exhibition of thy mercy and love in the gospel of Christ, thou hast fully evinced thy glory and majesty; and in contemplating thy dealings with the nations, well may we hide our faces, and say that we are afraid. How can we, who are sinful and degraded creatures, lift our eyes to the place where thine honour dwelleth, or take thy holy name into our guilty and polluted lips? We lament over the coldness and indifference of our own hearts, and our lukewarmness in the things of religion; we mourn over the decay of vital godliness around us, and the worldly and carnal spirit with which so many of our fellow-men are actuated; and we would now earnestly pray that thou mayest revive religion in the midst of the years. O Lord, in wrath remember mercy. We have, like prodigal children, gone far from our Father's house; we have despised the wise regulations of our Father's family; we have neglected our advantages; we have abused all our privileges; we have been satisfying ourselves with husks, and have not been seeking to partake of the gospel feast which thou hast prepared for us. We are, indeed, unworthy

to be called thy children, and were we to receive our deserts, thy wrath would be our portion, and hell would be our inheritance. Merciful God, deal not with us as we have deserved; look not on us as we have sinned; see, God, our Shield; look on the face of thine Anointed. We would be thankful that there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared; with thee there is mercy and plenteous redemption. Lord, we believe, help our unbelief. Dispose our hearts to listen to thy word, and to receive, in all meekness and humility, thy truth. May it become the rule of our faith, hope, and practice. Pour out on each one of us, now kneeling before thee, thy holy Spirit in rich abundance, and as we read thy word, may our souls be watered as with the rains and dews of heaven, so that we may bring forth the fruits of righteousness to the praise and the glory of thy name. May thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. May thy way be known upon the earth, and thy saving health among all people. Let the people praise thee, O Lord, let all the people praise thee. O that thou, who of old didst show thy wonderful work in the deliverance of thy people, mayest be pleased still to manifest thy power in the conviction and conversion of sinners. We bless thy name for the mercies of the past night, make us truly thankful for all thy benefits. Be with us throughout this day. In our goings out, and in our comings in, in the house, and by the way, enable us to set thee the Lord always before us. Forgive the sins of our holy services, and hear us from thy holy habitation, and all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION VII.

REMARKS.

The vision which is recorded in this chapter, is introduced between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals, and represents in general the great success which attended the preaching of the gospel. Four angels appear to be standing on the four corners of the earth, and as the earth here is to be interpreted of the Roman empire, it was without impropriety spoken of as having a square form. These ministers of the Most High were appointed to hold the four winds of heaven, so that whatever might be the appearance of the atmosphere, none of its contents should be discharged within the limits that they had been commanded to guard. During

the period symbolized by the blowing of the trumpets the winds were permitted to rage in all their fury, but at this time there was a complete calm; it was a time of rest and tranquillity to the church. After the opening of the sixth seal the appearances in the heavens had been dreadful; an earthquake had desolated the earth, and terror had fallen on all classes of men, but the storm was hushed till the servants of God should be sealed. This was, in all probability, the period of tranquillity which the church enjoyed under Constantine the Great; for it was at that time that the persecution of the pagans terminated, and the members of the church could profess to be Christians without any apprehension of civil penalties. The angel who was to seal the servants of God, is the Redeemer himself, and by the sealing may be understood their steady adherence to pure and scriptural religion. The persons were not to be considered as descended from Abraham according to the flesh; they were Israelites according to the Spirit, and were preserved from apostacy during the blowing of the trumpets. The numbers sealed must be understood indefinitely, for we cannot suppose that the converts, even during the reign of antichrist, did not exceed an hundred and forty-four thousand. It must not be forgotten that the making or sealing is still going on, and will not be fulfilled till the last of Messiah's purchase shall receive this mark on his forehead. From the 9th to the 12th verse, there is found a prophecy of the multitude that shall be saved, which may probably take its date from the Reformation, and its final accomplishment will be found in the latter day. Multitudes, of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues, shall stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and having in their hands palms, the emblems of that victory which he has obtained in their behalf. While we continue members of the church militant, let it be our earnest desire to prepare for joining in the exercises of the church triumphant; and may we be taught from the heart to sing the song, 'Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.' From the 13th verse to the end of the chapter, the apostle is instructed as to the individuals who appear in white robes, and as to the way in which they come. They had come out of great tribulation; they had suffered severe persecution, and they were now enjoying the favour of God, and the love of their fellow-servants. Heaven is a place of service, not of suffering; of rest, not of idleness; of pleasure, not of unholy indulgence. The Lamb will be the light of his people; he will direct all their enjoyments; no sorrow or calamity will ever reach them, and the cold storms of this world will no longer be heard. O that we may die the death of the righteous, and may our last end be like his.

PRAYER.

To thee, O Lord, will we go, for thou hast the words and the gift of everlasting life. Thou hast made us, and not we ourselves, therefore to thee we lift up our souls; we seek our happiness in thee alone, and we pray that thou mayest

visit us with thy salvation. Not only hast thou preserved and supported us, but we have received the accumulated proofs of thy goodness and benevolence, when we were in actual and open rebellion against thee. We would acknowledge, in deep humility, that we are the monuments of thy mercy, and have not become, as we deserved, the memorials of thy righteous indignation. It is only of thy long-suffering and forbearance in Jesus Christ, that we have not been cut off in the midst of our sin. We desire to celebrate thy praise, and to magnify thy name, for thou art holy. Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night teacheth knowledge concerning thee. By thy protecting care we have been brought in peace and safety to the close of another day, and in health and comfort we have been again permitted to meet together, as a family, before thee. O Lord, we would be thankful, that thou hast been with us through the various employments, occupations, and duties, in which we have this day been engaged, and we would now make mention of the loving-kindness of the Lord, who is good, and whose mercy endureth for ever. We bless thy name for the comfort that we have in our relations, and for the domestic peace and happiness that we enjoy; enable us to be faithful and conscientious in the discharge of all our relative duties. We bless thee for the home in which we dwell, and for the provision which thou hast made for the supply of all our wants; in the midst of all our comforts, help us to remember the wants of the poor and needy, of the homeless and the wanderer; give us grace to bestow of our abundance upon them, and may we be enabled to exercise our charity in the true spirit of the gospel. May our house be a Bethel; a place where thy worship is regularly practised, and where thou, the Lord, mayest delight to dwell. We bless thee, O Lord, for the service of the inferior animals which thou hast placed at our disposal; enable us to use them as thy gift, and not treat them with cruelty, nor make them the instruments of sin. We bless thee, O Lord, for the exercise of our reason which thou continuest to us unimpaired, and we pray that thou mayest help us to devote it to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the extension of his kingdom in the world. We bless thy name, above all, for the gift of thy Son to the children of men, through whose sufferings and death we obtain peace of conscience; and for the great and precious promises which are in him yea and Amen; and for the throne of grace to which, through Christ, we have free and ready access. May thy Holy Spirit dwell in our hearts; may our bodies be-

come the temples of the Holy Ghost; may he enable us to avail ourselves of all our privileges, and to make a right use of all our advantages. Thy goodness has been displayed to us in casting our lot in a land where the gospel is preached. Give us an ear to hear it, an understanding to comprehend it, a heart to relish its truths, and strength of mind to carry them into practice. May our rest, this night, be free from all disquieting fears and all perplexing cares; and may we be preserved from every danger during its silent watches. In thee we put our trust, and all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM IX. 7.

SCRIPTURE—ZEPHANIAH I.

REMARKS.

Sin is the reproach, and if not forsaken and forgiven, must prove the ruin, of any people. As the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem had become exceedingly degenerate, and apostatized from the worship of Jehovah, the prophet Zephaniah was sent unto them to denounce the desolating judgments that were coming upon them. But however guilty a people may be, when grievous calamities befall them, they are ever ready to murmur and complain; the prophet, therefore enjoins them to keep silence, and meekly to submit to the merited correction of the Almighty. When these threatened judgments should overtake them, the Lord would search Jerusalem with candles, and in a peculiar manner punish the men that were settled on their lees; who were self-confident; who trusted in their wealth and external privileges; who had become so hardened in iniquity, and so bold in their infidelity and impiety, as to despise the promises and threatenings of Jehovah, declaring that he would neither fulfil the one nor execute the other, but regarded their conduct with indifference. The prophet, however, assures them that the evil day was near at hand, and when it arrived, their wealth and property would be of no avail; they would become a prey to their enemies, and their habitations and vineyards they would destroy. The day of national desolation should be a day of wrath; a day of darkness and gloominess, of clouds and thick darkness; a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities and the high towers, which should then afford them no protection or defence.

Let us then, as a sinful nation, take warning; let us not trust in our riches, our privileges, our army, or our navy; let us not be proud and self-confident, while we hold fast iniquity, and will not let it go: but let us repent, and turn unto the Lord, who is waiting to be gracious, and to our God, who is rich in mercy and ready to forgive. Let us seek for pardoning mercy through the atoning sacrifice of

Christ, for sanctification through the agency of the Holy Spirit, and for grace to help us in time of need. To excite us to this, let us remember the consequences of persevering in national impenitence and impiety. 'For the nation or the kingdom that will not serve him shall perish; yea, all those nations shall be utterly wasted,' Isa. lx. 12.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art the great God and Governor among the nations, ruling in Jacob, and unto the ends of the earth. Thou displayest thy glory in the works of the visible creation, in the procedure of thy providence, and especially in the work of our redemption by Jesus Christ. Thou exercisest a supreme, righteous, and merciful government over all the works which thou hast made; and we rejoice that we live under thy moral administration, and that all things work together for good to them that love thee, and are the called according to thy purpose. We acknowledge our constant dependence upon thee, and our increasing obligations to love and serve thee. We desire to thank thee for all the privileges we enjoy, and for all the goodness and mercy thou hast caused to follow us. We acknowledge we have not been duly grateful to thee for thy benefits; that we have been disobedient children unto thee our heavenly Father, and rebellious subjects unto thee our righteous Sovereign. Our sins are numerous, heinous, and highly aggravated, and it is of thy mercies we have not been consumed. O may we be humbled under a deep sense of our sins and sinfulness; may we confess and forsake them, that we may obtain mercy. May we be enlightened, purified, and comforted, and be enabled henceforth to depart from all iniquity, to walk in the way of thy commandments, and to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God. Lord, fulfil in us all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, and we in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. May our faith work by love, and our love be manifested by a cheerful and constant obedience to all God's holy commandments. Thus may we consecrate ourselves to the service of God by presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service. We thank thee for thy kind care over us during the past night, and for the mercies of this morning; and we beseech thee to be with us, and to bless us with thy gracious presence through the day, and to preserve us from all evil. May we be in thy fear all the day, remem-

being that we are ever under thine inspection, and that thine eye is continually upon us. Assist us in the discharge of the several duties that are incumbent upon us; may we be universally conscientious, and whatever we do, may we do all in obedience to thine authority, in dependence upon thy promised grace, and with a view to thy glory. Hear, O Lord, these our supplications, pardon our offences, and accept of us, and bless us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXIX. 5.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION VIII.

REMARKS.

This chapter stands in immediate connection with the opening of the sixth seal in the 12th verse of the sixth chapter, and the opening of the seventh seal in the beginning of this eighth chapter. 'And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour.' By heaven here, it is obvious we are not to understand the celestial world, but the visible church, which is frequently styled in the Gospels, and in this book of Revelation, heaven, or the kingdom of heaven; while the heathen, or Roman empire, is denominated the earth. There being silence in heaven, therefore, means that at the time here referred to, there should be a short season of peace and tranquillity in the visible church, which took place after Constantine embraced Christianity. At the 2d verse, it is stated that John saw seven angels who stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets; and then he adds that another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne, &c. This other angel was not a created angel like one of the seven who had received the seven trumpets, but was Jesus Christ our great Mediator, who is styled in scripture the Angel of the Covenant, who is now in heaven, and is our great High Priest and Intercessor, before the throne of God. Heaven, in this vision, is represented under the emblem of the ancient tabernacle or temple, and we know that in the Jewish temple the golden altar of incense stood in the holy place, just before the vail which separated it from the holy of holies. This angel had a golden censer which held live coals, on which incense was scattered, and which raised a fragrant smoke which was to be offered with the prayers of all saints, in order to render them acceptable unto God. All the people of God are an holy people; they are saints, people devoted to the service of God; being holy, they are all a praying people, none of them are prayerless. All their prayers, however, are accompanied with many imperfections

and sinful defects, and, therefore, could not be accepted on account of any merit of their own. But Christ our great High Priest pleads the merits of his own perfect sacrifice, and perfumed with this incense, they are accepted by God, or heard and answered. At the 5th verse, we are informed that this angel, or Jesus Christ, took the censer he held, and going from the golden altar before the vail, he went to the brazen altar without, and filled it with burning coals, as emblematical of the wrath of God, and cast the fire upon the earth, or Roman empire; in consequence of which there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake. These are descriptive of the sore judgments coming upon the empire and its inhabitants, as a punishment of their sins, and which were inflicted in their appointed season. We have not space to proceed with the explanation of the four trumpets, which in succession were sounded, as narrated in the rest of this chapter; and have only room to remark that the seasons of peace which the church has hitherto enjoyed, have, in general, been of short duration, and ought therefore to be well improved. It is comfortable for Christians to know, that amidst all the persecutions the church may endure, and all the revolutions which take place in the world, and all the judgments inflicted upon sinful nations, the Lord reigns in righteousness, and will overrule them for the destruction of his enemies, and the preparation and improvement of his saints. These winds may blow away the chaff, or high nominal professors, but the precious wheat shall remain and be gathered into the heavenly garner. This passage holds out great encouragement to Christians to pray and not to faint. Their prayers are imperfect and defective; but when presented with the much incense of their interceding High Priest, they shall be heard and answered. Let them pray always, and not faint; for the Lord will assuredly hear his own elect, who cry day and night unto him.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, and the praises of Israel, and whose name is holy; the Creator and Preserver, the Proprietor and Governor of all things. We bless thee for creating goodness and providential care; but especially for the wonders of thy redeeming love, for so loving the world as to send thine only begotten and well-beloved Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. We acknowledge that we are less than the least of all thy mercies, and that as sinners we deserve to suffer all the effects of thy righteous displeasure. We bless thee for thy sparing mercy, and pray that it may be accompanied with thy saving mercy to each of us now before thee, that we may be made vessels of mercy, meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. May thy goodness soften our hard hearts, and lead us to repentance; and, like returning prodigals to our

heavenly Father, to say, Father, we have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and are no more worthy to be called thy children. Grant that we may be reconciled unto thee by receiving the atonement, and that being found in Christ, he may be made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that glorying we may glory only in the Lord. Thus may we all be saints, holy beings conformed to God in his moral perfections, and constantly employed in his holy and honourable service. O may we receive the spirit of grace and supplication, praying always with all prayer and supplications in the Spirit, and having Christ as our New Testament altar. May we through him offer unto God all our spiritual sacrifices for acceptance. May we remember that if we are not saints, we must be impenitent sinners under the curse of the law, and having thy wrath abiding on us; and that when Christ comes again to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe, we must be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. We thank thee, O Lord, for our personal and domestic comforts; and now we commit ourselves to thy care and keeping during the silence and slumbers of the night. May we be safe, being under thy protection, and if spared to see the dawn of another day, may we be raised up in health and comfort, and receive those supplies of grace which are necessary to fit us for its duties. Forgive, we beseech thee, our manifold transgressions, and may these, our imperfect prayers, be heard and answered, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXXVIII.

SCRIPTURE—ZEPHANIAH II.

REMARKS.

In the beginning of this chapter the Jewish people are enjoined to assemble and humble themselves before the Lord, to deprecate his deserved wrath, and supplicate his unmerited mercy. They are directed to attend to this duty without delay, before the sentence denounced against them should be carried into execution. Although this solemn and seasonable warning should be disregarded by the great body of the people, yet the meek and humble among them, who trembled at the word of the Lord, and were afraid of his righteous judgments, would obey this injunction, and would seek the Lord by fervent supplication, and trust in his mercy, and this would either be had in the day of the Lord's anger, or supported and comforted under the calamities that came

upon them. They are assured, for their encouragement, that Gaza and the other sea-port towns of the Philistines, and their associates, who had often harassed them, would be destroyed, and their sea-coasts should be dwellings for shepherds, and folds for their flocks to lie down in safety; and that Moab and the children of Ammon, who had often reproached them and invaded their territories, should, like Sodom and Gomorrah, become a perpetual desolation. Nay, the Ethiopians also would be slain by the sword, and Assyria, with Nineveh its capital, should become a desolation and a wilderness. Thus the Lord would be terrible unto the nations who oppressed and persecuted his people; would famish all their gods, destroy their idols and overturn idolatry, and establish the worship of the true God in the land, and even in all the distant islands of the Gentiles, of which we in this isle are a living proof. No sinners are more hateful to God than hypocritical professors of the true religion; and yet even persons of this character, we learn from this chapter, are called upon to consider their ways, and to turn unto the Lord, and to plead for pardoning mercy and sanctifying and saving grace, for where sin hath abounded, grace much more abounds. Even sinful nations, under tokens of the divine displeasure, ought to assemble themselves together, and to cry unto the Lord for mercy, for they shall not seek his face in vain. But the avowed enemies of God and of his people, who persevere in impenitence and unbelief, shall not escape his righteous judgments. He hears their revilings and reproaches, and he will at last humble their pride, and inflict upon them his threatened judgments.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art holy, and just, and good, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Evil cannot dwell with thee, nor can sinners in themselves stand before thee with acceptance. We all are as an unclean thing, and our iniquities as the wind have carried us away from thee. We have transgressed thy holy law, forfeited all claim to thy favour, and become obnoxious to the effects of thy righteous displeasure. Thou mightiest have banished us for ever from thy presence, and deprived us of the hope of mercy, and of the privilege of prayer. But we bless thee for opening to us a new and living way, by which we, sinful as we are, may draw near unto thee with the hope of acceptance. We thank thee for setting Christ before us as the way, the truth, and the life; through him we would now come unto thee and present our supplications. Whilst thou art commanding us, in thy word, to turn unto thee that we may live, we beseech thee to give us the grace of true repentance. Turn us and we shall be turned, for thou art the Lord our God; and whilst thou art saying unto us, Seek ye my face, dispose our hearts to reply, Thy face and favour, O Lord, will we seek, for thy favour is life, and

thy loving-kindness is better than life and all its enjoyments. Grant, O Lord, that we may be poor in spirit, that ours may be the kingdom of heaven. May we mourn over our sins, that we may be comforted. May we be meek, that we may inherit the earth. May we hunger and thirst after righteousness, that we may be filled. May we be merciful, that we may obtain mercy. May we be peace-makers, that we may be called the children of God; and pure in heart, that we may see God. May it be our constant study to be growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and may we trust in the name of the Lord, that we may be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, and saved from the wrath to come. May we be safe under the protection of the Almighty, and suitably exercised under the dispensations of divine providence. In the day of health and prosperity may we not be proud, and in the day of sickness and adversity may we not despond; but trusting in the Lord, may we be kept in perfect peace, and enabled to say in every situation, Good is the will of the Lord. Deliver us from the slavery of sin and satan; bring us into the glorious liberty of the children of God. May idolatry and wickedness, cruelty and crimes, be banished from the face of the earth; and may incense and a pure offering be presented unto the Lord from the rising to the setting sun. May men be blessed in Christ, and all nations call him blessed. We thank thee, O Lord, for protecting us during the past night, and for any rest we have enjoyed, and for the mercies of this morning. Be with us through the day, assist us in discharging the duties that are incumbent on us in our several stations and relations, and thus may we promote our own personal happiness and the comfort of all the members of our household. Pardon all our offences, accept of our thanks for all thy mercies, and let goodness and mercy follow us all our days, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CII. 16.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATIONS IX.

REMARKS.

The star which fell from heaven, by the most approved interpreters, is understood to denote Mahomet the impostor. He began early in the seventh century to declare that he had enjoyed extraordinary intercourse with God, that he had been in heaven, and there learned a religion which he was to publish to the world as an improvement of Christianity, and

a reformation of the corruption it had contracted; hence he is not unaptly represented as a star falling from heaven to the earth. Power is given to this deceiver to open the bottomless pit, the pestiferous exhalations of which contaminated the atmosphere, and darkened the sun. The locusts which came out of the smoke represent the numerous armies of the Saracens, who spread desolations through the neighbouring nations; they also resembled scorpions, whose sting is frequently mortal. These locusts and scorpions, however, were not to hurt the grass of the earth, but only the men who had not the seal of God on their foreheads, or were only nominal Christians. The time when they were permitted to harass mankind was limited to five months, or a hundred and fifty years. During this period the sufferings of many were so great that they preferred death to the enjoyment of life. The locusts are said, in the 7th verse, to be like horses prepared unto battle; but although like horses, they carried desolation with them. The greatest mischief they effected was by their tails, which, being provided with stings, they spread their deadly and poisonous errors, and thus proved active agents of satan the great destroyer. The voice of the angel, from the horns of the altar, announced the judgments which were coming on those who corrupted the gospel, and thus deprived it of its saving efficacy. After the sounding of the trumpet of the sixth angel, he was ordered to loose the four angels who were bound in the great river Euphrates. This is generally understood to refer to the four Turkish sultans of Bagdad, Damascus, Aleppo, and Iconium. These were loosed, or prepared, for a definite period, to kill the third part of men by the fire, smoke, and brimstone, which issued from their mouths; and yet the rest of the men who were not killed, but survived these massacres, repented not of their evil deeds, of their murders, their sorceries, their fornications, and their thefts. Let Christians learn from this passage to be well established in the knowledge and belief of the truth, that they may not be seduced by heretics and impostors, who lie in wait to deceive; and they may also perceive that, although all the sufferings which God inflicts upon a sinful people are designed to lead them to repentance, that their sins may be forgiven, yet such is the deep depravity of human nature, that they hold fast iniquity, and will not let it go, and thus they harden their hearts, and are given up to judicial blindness, so that nothing can touch or turn them. Wo to the individuals and nations from which the Lord thus departs, for they have nothing before them but the prospect of increasing misery in this world, and everlasting destruction in the world to come; for he who, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his own heart, shall suddenly perish, and that without remedy.

PRAYER.

O Lord our God, thou art exceeding great, being clothed with honour and with majesty. Thou art glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, ever doing wonders. Thy power is Almighty, thy wisdom is unsearchable, thy goodness is un-

bounded, thy holiness unspotted, thy justice inflexible, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works. We bless thee for proclaiming thy name to be the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and ready to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, and yet will by no means clear the guilty without satisfaction to thy justice. We thank thee for appointing, under the ancient dispensation, typical atoning sacrifices, as prefiguratives of the great atonement which Christ in the end of the world was to make for sin, when he gave himself for us a sacrifice and an offering for a sweet smelling savour; and we thank thee for setting him forth under the gospel dispensation as a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare thy righteousness in the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, that thou mightest be just, and the justifier of them who believe in Jesus. We desire, therefore, to approach the footstool of the throne of grace, to confess our sins with humility and contrition, in the hope of obtaining mercy and grace to help in time of need. We acknowledge we have not loved thee with all our hearts, nor worshipped thee in spirit and in truth. We have not hallowed thy name, nor sanctified thy sabbaths. We have failed in the duties we owe unto thee, to our fellow-creatures, and fellow-Christians, and to ourselves. We are exceedingly guilty; our sins are great and highly aggravated. We have been careful about many things, and neglectful of the one thing needful. We have preferred the safety of our bodies to the salvation of our souls, and the shadows of time to the realities of eternity. Deaf to the voice of wisdom, we have walked in the ways of folly; and because sentence against our evil deeds has not been speedily executed, our hearts have been set in us to do evil. Lord, be merciful to us sinners. Justify us freely by thy grace, sanctify us by thy Spirit, strengthen us by thy grace for the various duties we may be called to discharge. Put thy laws into our minds, write them upon our hearts, and cause us to keep thy statutes, and judgments, and all thy holy commandments. Enable us to repent of all our past sins, and to bring forth the fruits meet for repentance; and when thy judgments are abroad in the earth, may we learn righteousness. We thank thee for the mercies of the day that has now closed upon us, and for all the mercies of the week now about to terminate. We commit ourselves to thy gracious protection through the night. If we are spared to see the light of another Lord's day, may we be raised in a spiritual frame of mind, and be enabled to

sanctify thy sabbath, and reverence thy sanctuary, and derive much spiritual benefit from thy word and ordinances. And when we shall have finished our course, may we die in faith, and receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls. Graciously hear, pardon, and accept of us, and bless us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CXLIII. CXLIV.

REMARKS.

With what freedom does the psalmist here come into the presence of God, and with what confidence does he appeal, not so much to his mercy as to his faithfulness and truth. This is the more remarkable, inasmuch as he pretends to no merit, and urges no plea from former services. On the contrary, he treats God not to enter into judgment with him, as in his sight no flesh living shall be justified. This is indeed a mystery, but it has a key, and that key is the atoning death of Christ, through means of which not only may one man, but even the most ungodly man living be justified, even in God's sight.

This is a precious truth we should never let slip from our memories, for in no other way can we know Jehovah to be a just God, and yet a Saviour; and in no other way can we come boldly to a throne of grace, to obtain mercy and find grace to help us in every time of need.

At this period the psalmist seems to have been in a very distressed state. He was exposed to more than ordinary persecution, for his life was smitten down to the ground, and he was made to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. By all this his spirit was overwhelmed within him, and his heart made desolate.

The psalmist's heart, however, was not long thus desolate, for he soon remembered the days of old, and meditated on God's works. Nay, from musing he proceeded to praying, till his earnest cry, 'hear me speedily, O Lord,' brought relief.

By nature we are all not only ignorant of, but unwilling to obey God. This the psalmist felt, and hence he said not only 'teach me,' but lead me. Both to teach and to lead is the blessed work of God's 'good Spirit.' Blessed are those who are taught by such a teacher, and led by such a guide. But, alas, how few are found thus blessed, for by multitudes the falsehoods of the father of lies are preferred to the truths of this divine Instructor. In these circumstances it would be well for each of us to ask, 'who is my teacher, and who my guide?'

In battle king David was eminently successful, but he knew well to whom to ascribe the glory; for he exclaimed, 'Blessed be the Lord my strength,

which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.' Christians, like him, have still their battles, for their whole life is a warfare. Enemies they have both within and without, but to subdue either the one or the other, is what they cannot do, until God himself teach their hands to war, and their fingers to fight. He, however, can and will do this for them, for he is their strength and their fortress; their high tower, their deliverer and shield. Well may all who have known the Lord's goodness, and who have experienced him to be a present help in time of trouble, say, 'I will sing a new song unto thee, O Lord, upon a psaltery, and on an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.'

King David desired great prosperity for himself and for his people. His prayer was that their sons might be as plants, not withered, but growing; that their daughters might be as corner-stones, after the similitude of a palace, beautiful as well as useful; that their garners might be full; their flocks increased; their oxen healthy and strong; and that there be no breaking in, and no complaining, because no plundering and no poverty. This was his prayer, and happy, he exclaims, is the people that is in such a case. With this we all readily agree, but we must not forget that if temporal blessings be good, spiritual blessings are better; and if 'happy is that people that is in such a case,' happier far is that people 'whose God is the Lord.' Let each of us now ask, 'Am I among that happy people; is God the Father my Lord; God the Son my Redeemer, and God the Holy Ghost my Sanctifier?'

PRAYER.

Gracious Lord, we desire to come before thee, on this the morning of thine own day, with the voice of gratitude and praise. This is the day the Lord hath made, in it would we rejoice. We bless thee, O Lord, for thy unspeakable gift, Christ Jesus; and that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Enable us to believe on his name, and rely on his finished work. May we be graciously redeemed from all iniquity, and so purified as to be made a peculiar people, zealous of good works. May we be so strengthened by thy grace, as ever to testify that we have been with Jesus. We mourn, O Lord, that hitherto this has been so much forgotten by us. We mourn that our zeal for good has been so cold; that our faith has been so weak, and our love so transient. We mourn that, notwithstanding all our privileges, we come so lamentably short, that notwithstanding all our light, we still walk in so much darkness. We mourn that we have often allowed the cares and pleasures of this world to wean our hearts from thee, and that through the deceitfulness of sin, we have so often disobeyed thy voice, and despised thy correction. We confess with shame that often through the wilful blindness of our minds, we behold no beauty in Emmanuel, that

he should be desired; and no glory in his work, that he should be confided in. O Lord, we beseech thee this day so to fill us with thy Spirit, that the word read and to be spoken may be abundantly blessed to our souls. Wherever Christ is preached this day, there may he be glorified in the conversion of sinners. May thy word be attended every where with demonstration of the Spirit, and with power, and may multitudes be led to forsake the service of sin and satan. O Lord, hasten the time when all shall know thee; when the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and when the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Hasten the time when the eyes of the spiritually blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf be unstopped, and the lame leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing. Hasten the time when all the divisions in thy church shall be healed; when Judah shall no more vex Ephraim, nor Ephraim envy Judah, but when all thy people shall be of one mind, and one heart. May brotherly love more and more abound, till those that are without are again constrained to say, Behold how these Christians love one another. O Lord, remember the young and rising generation. Bless all the efforts now making for their conversion. Bless every sabbath-school in our land. May teachers and taught be alike taught of thee, and possess not only knowledge in their understanding, but grace in their hearts. Keep us by thy Holy Spirit throughout this day. May we not think our own thoughts, nor speak our own words, nor do our own actions, on thy holy day. Graciously remember all our friends and relations. May all of them be related to thee by the blood of thy Son, and become friends of Jesus. Give them a new heart, and put a right spirit within them. Cause them to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning, and to know the way in which they should walk. Teach them all to do thy will, and quicken them for thy name's sake. Graciously remember too, we beseech thee, all the children of affliction. Suit the communications of thy grace to their respective wants. Give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. May they feel that all things whatsoever work together for good to them that love God. Forgive, O Lord, the sins of our holy things, and now graciously hear and answer these our prayers, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLV. 1.

SCRIPTURE—PSALM CXLV.

REMARKS.

The more we know of God, the more will we feel disposed to extol and bless his holy name. Those only who know not God, weary in his service, and have no sympathy with the psalmist when he said, 'every day will I bless thee, and praise thy name for ever and ever.' But why did he thus praise the Lord. He did so because his greatness was unsearchable; because his majesty had a glorious honour; because his works were wondrous, and because of the memory of his great goodness.

From this, the wonder evidently is, not that he praised the Lord so much, but that multitudes praise him so little; not that he blessed the Lord every day, but that multitudes never bless the Lord at all. We need not a stronger proof, than this affords, of the natural alienation of our hearts from God; for were we not naturally without God, no day could possibly pass without praise and prayer.

'Who is a God like unto thee?' exclaims the prophet, and the more we consider the character of God, the more will we feel disposed to join with the prophet in the exclamation: for the Lord is not only gracious, but full of compassion; not only slow to anger, but of great mercy; not only good to all, but spreading his tender mercies over all his works. Had this not been the character of God, our condition now would not be what it is; for who, but One slow to anger, could have borne with all our sinfulness and rebellion? and who, but One of great mercy, could have endured our vile ingratitude and waywardness of heart? We have been unwearied in sinning, yet God has borne with us. We have been incessant in our provocations, yet has his gracious compassion not failed. We have broken his laws, opposed his will, trampled on his authority, yet has he proved a God of tender mercies.

Where sin abounded, his grace does much more abound. God has given a proof of his grace, transcendently glorious, for he commended his love to us in giving up his beloved Son to the death for us, even while we were yet sinners.

This very psalm, indeed, tells us of this Son, for he is no other than the 'my God, O King,' whom the psalmist here extols. But let us observe what he here says in regard to him, 'He upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all that be bowed down. Yes, Emmanuel himself upholds his fainting people, and prevents them from falling by his own blessed arms. Those, too, whom he sees bowed down with grief, and being laden with sin, does he raise up, removing, by his own hand, their grievous burden. But, more than this, he becomes their friend and keeper, so that they want no good thing. Their meat they ever receive in due season. Their every want he supplies, for he opens his hand to them. Their every wish is gratified, for he fulfils the desire of them that fear him. Never are they disappointed by them, for he is holy in all his works, and he is

righteous in all his ways. Their prayers never ascend in vain, for he hears their cry, and will save them. Their trust in him is never misplaced, for he is nigh to all that call upon him in truth. When exposed to danger, or pursued by enemies, they never resort to him in vain, for he preserves all them that love him, while he destroys the wicked. Such is the character of this gracious King, and happy surely must all those be who are truly his subjects. His subjects alas, however, are still few, although there are many in profession. His subjects must all be willing ones, for a forced subjection he will not acknowledge.

If in reality this King is our King, and this Lord our Lord, then let each of us in sincerity say, 'I will extol thee, my God, O King.' If we are truly his people, let our constant aim be to spread the knowledge of his name; and if from the kingdom of darkness we have been brought into his kingdom of light, let us never cease to show forth the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. Let us, among other ways, do this by praying earnestly for the enlargement of his kingdom. The kingdoms of the world are yet, alas, not his. Satan is still, to a sad extent, the god of this world, and commands the services of multitudes. Blessed be God, however, this shall not always be the case, for the sure language of prophecy is, 'all kings shall yet fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him.' Encouraged by this glorious prophecy, let us rest not till every knee bow, and every tongue confess him to be both Lord and King.

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou art great, and greatly to be praised; thy greatness is unsearchable. All thy works shall praise thee, and thy saints shall bless thee, for thou art good to all, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works. We bless thee for all our privileges, for all the means of grace, and for the joyful sound of the gospel. May we not misimprove them, but do thou send a plenteous rain to refresh thine inheritance when it is weary, and make all the places about thy hill a blessing. Our time and our thoughts we have wasted upon the vanities of the world, and have been forgetful and careless of the realities of eternity. We have much need to say, forgive even in our very holiest services, and to plead that thou wouldest not enter into judgment with us, for in thy sight can no flesh be justified. Lead us now to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. May we be washed in his blood, and purified by his Spirit; and give us, O Lord, unwavering trust in thy unchangeable love and grace, and unshaken confidence in the atoning death and glorious intercession of our Redeemer. Do thou so unite us by faith to our great Head, that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any

other creature, may be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Hear also, O Lord, our prayers in behalf of all thy people throughout the world. Graciously bless all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth. Awaken all careless sinners who yet care for none of these things. By thy Spirit convince them of sin, and lead them to inquire what they must do to be saved. Instruct them in the saving knowledge of the Redeemer, and give them grace to believe unto salvation. Let thy word, O Lord, have free course, and be glorified. Remember, we beseech thee, all thy outcast people, who are still loved for their father's sake. Bless all the ministers of the gospel, make them wise, faithful, and diligent in their Master's service. Bless all our friends and relations with the precious blessings of the gospel. Remember also in thy great mercy, all the children of affliction. In the night of their trouble, do thou encourage them by the stars of thy promises, and may they get grace fully to rely on thy faithfulness, knowing that all thy promises are yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. And now, O Lord, be very near to us. Be our God and our guide, even unto death, and our never-failing portion. During our pilgrimage on earth do thou never leave us, and in our temptations do thou never forget us. Ever make thy grace sufficient for us, and perfect that strength in our weakness. Hitherto, O Lord, thou hast mercifully blessed us, and hast never left thyself without a witness to thy love and goodness, for thou hast crowned us with loving-kindness, and hast satisfied our mouths with good things. Accept of our thanksgiving for all these mercies, and make us more and more grateful. Watch over us during the silent watches of the night, and continue to bless us. Our waiting eyes are now towards thee. Do thou hear and answer us for the Lord Jesus' sake. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 17.

SCRIPTURE—ZEPHANIAH III.

REMARKS.

We have here a very striking proof of the depravity of human nature. The city is said to be not only filthy, but oppressing; not only disobedient to the voice, but heedless of correction; not only distrustful of the Lord, but totally alienated from him. Such cities, alas! may still be found which

sadly resemble this one, and not until God's people send up their united and effectual prayers, will there be that glorious change announced in prophecy, when righteousness shall flow down all our streets. Observe farther, however. Not only were the princes as roaring lions, but the judges were as evening wolves; not only were the prophets light and treacherous, but the priests polluted the sanctuary, and did violence to the law. Thus, we see that all ranks of the people were alike depraved; the rich equally with the poor, fatally infected with the disease of sin. How vain, then, to speak as some do, of the dignity of human nature, and of the love to virtue which the human heart naturally possesses. All such statements are contradicted by the most palpable experience; for, let men say what they may, it is undeniably true that there are none righteous, no not one. Slight outward differences there may indeed be, for some may be open, while others are more secret transgressors, but yet, when measured by the holy law of God, how slight is the difference between them.

In the midst of this, however, it is pleasing to hear the prophet exclaim, 'the just God is in the midst thereof, he will do no iniquity.' Whatever others may do, he still remains the same holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil. And, as God can do no iniquity himself, so neither can he endure it in others, for his express determination, mentioned in ver. 8, is 'to gather the nations and to assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them his indignation, even all his fierce anger.' From this let us learn that while God is a God of mercy, he is no less a God of justice; and that while he is ready to forgive the humble penitent, he is no less ready to punish the impenitently guilty.

In the verses following, glorious things are promised. Those who now know not God, are yet to serve him, and the dispersed of Israel are again to be restored. So fully are God's people to be forgiven, and their backsliding healed, that they will have no more conscience of sin.

In that coming glorious day, they shall not be put to shame for all their doings, wherein they had transgressed against God. They that rejoice in their pride are to be removed, and all haughtiness because of God's holy mountain is to be brought low. Humility is to take the place of pride; faith, of unbelief; and doubting, of despair, for then will they trust the name of the Lord. Then, too, the remnant of Israel shall do no iniquity, and speak no lies; a deceitful tongue shall no more be in their mouth, for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid. Such are the blessed prophecies, and such the sweet promises contained in this chapter.

O how refreshing to think that Christ is mighty, that his arm is not shortened that it cannot save. How sweet to think that he will save and deliver his people from all the power, from all the guilt, and all the pollution of their sins; and that when thus saved, he will rejoice over them with peculiar gladness, renewing from time to time his love. But O how sad will it be, if notwithstanding such a salvation, and such a Saviour, we are not saved. How

mournful, if through indifference or enmity, our guilt is not removed, our peace not restored, our wounds not healed, our sins not forgiven, and our wants not supplied. When so much is at stake, there should be no trifling. Our immediate duty is to examine our condition, that if not yet in the faith, we may cry out, What shall we do to be saved; and that if renewed, we may the more entirely surrender ourselves, soul and body, to God's glorious service.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we bless thy holy name, that through Christ we now enjoy freedom of access to a throne of grace. O Lord, graciously draw near to us at this time, and fill us with thy love. So deal with us, that our souls may bless thy holy name for all thy benefits. May we know thee to be gracious in forgiving our sins, healing our diseases, redeeming our lives from destruction, and in crowning us with loving-kindness and tender mercy. We rejoice to know, O Lord, that we cannot ask too much, if we ask in the name of Christ. For his sake thou art ready to fulfil all our petitions, and to supply all our wants. O Lord, we need life, light, and love; and we rejoice that in Christ there is a fullness of these blessings, to which we are all welcome. We beseech thee, O Lord, not to leave us to ourselves. Allow us not to be satisfied with a mere name to live, while dead; or to rest in the form, without the power of godliness. Help us to say in all sincerity of soul, Search us, O God, and know our hearts, and see if there be any wicked way in us. By thy good Spirit, O Lord, do thou teach us, and lead us into the land of uprightness. We deserve not these blessings at thy hands, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. We claim them, not for any merit of ours, but only through the infinite merits and glorious intercession of Jesus Christ, in whom and by whom alone, we can approach with humble boldness the footstool of thy throne. Accept, O Lord, of our thanksgivings for all thy kindness to us since we had a being. We thank thee for what peace and repose we may have last night enjoyed, for the light of another day, and, above all, for the precious truth we have now been permitted to read. We thank thee for all our unnumbered mercies; but especially for a preached gospel, and an all-sufficient, all-willing Saviour, through whom we may find eternal life. From a sweet experience in our hearts of the truth of thy word, may we truly feel that the gospel is a joyful sound, and may we be enabled to testify by our whole life and conversation its glorious and divine efficacy on the soul. Attend us all, O

Lord, throughout this day. Be thou our gracious Keeper; preserve us from all evil, and enable us at all times to let our light so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may be led to glorify thee our Father in heaven. May the instructions received by us on thy holy sabbath be ever brought to our remembrance, and be applied in all the duties and trials of life. Let us never be ashamed of thee nor of thy cause, but so faithfully confess thy name, that all may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. O Lord, graciously remember those that are over us in the Lord. Make them pastors after thine own heart, men of God and men of prayer, faithfully devoted to thy service. Remember, too, all that are in authority over us, that they may at all times be under thy holy guidance, and that we under them may live in peace and godliness. Remember in mercy all the efforts now making to spread the gospel both among Jews and Gentiles. Abundantly bless every exertion, and pour out thy Spirit to refresh thy heritage, for it is weary. Now, wait we for but thy blessing. Lord, hear us in mercy, forgive, and answer us, for the Lord Jesus' sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLVI. 1.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION X.

REMARKS.

Much that is written in this book is dark, but we have reason to bless God, that what is essential for a sinner to know, is so plain that a very child may understand. In regard to the meaning of different parts of this chapter, different opinions are entertained; but most commentators seem to be at one in thinking that Jesus is the angel here referred to. And observe the glory of his nature and character. He is said to be 'mighty,' and who can doubt this, when he is here said to stand with one foot on the land, and another on the sea, thus denoting that both are alike under his royal sway. Yes, he is truly mighty. Hear this, and be encouraged, all ye weak and trembling saints, for though you are weak he is strong, and will perfect his strength in your weakness. He is mighty, and all his might will be employed in your protection. How strong soever your enemies may be; how fiercely soever the lion may rage; how proudly soever the winds may blow, or the waters foam, yet what of all this, when Jesus your friend is mighty, and by one word can shut the lion's mouth, and still the tempter's rage!

But on the other hand, the might of Jesus may well alarm every sinner, who is not yet through him reconciled to God. Who can resist such power as that possessed by Emmanuel? Alas! no sinner

can or will ever dare. O then that sinners now would kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and they perish from the way, when his anger is kindled but a little.

But while Christ is mighty, he is at the same time faithful. The covenant which he has made with his people, is one never to be forgotten. It is a covenant ordered in all things and sure, and though saints often fail in their part of the engagement, yet Christ continues faithful.

In proof of this, we have only to look to the rainbow, here said to be on his head, for it is the emblem of his faithfulness and of the perpetuity of his covenant. O when such is his faithfulness, how strong should be our faith; and when such is his truth, how unwavering should be our confidence, and how cheerfully should we resign ourselves into his hands. Farther still, his face is said to be as 'the sun;' thus pointing out, on the one hand, the fullness of his personal glory and majesty, and on the other, the fullness of that light by which he enlightens his beloved people. Yes, in Christ is treasured up all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. This fullness is as a fountain ever flowing for the benefit of his people, out of which they are freely invited to draw without money and without price.

And while the face of Jesus is like the sun, his feet are like pillars of fire. Those who depend upon him, are not trusting to a broken reed, but to a pillar more stable than the mountains, for the mountains shall depart, but he shall remain. Let all then who are concerned for their salvation ask, Am I, or am I not, leaning on this pillar.

In his hand, we are told still farther, was a little book, and he cried with a loud voice as when a lion roareth. And when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. What the little book contained, or what these seven thunders were, it is difficult to say. Indeed, for the time, this seemed to be intentionally hid, for when the apostle, hearing the seven thunders, was about to write, a voice from heaven forbade him, saying, 'Seal up these things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.' Let us learn from this that God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts, nor God's ways as man's ways, and that secret things belong unto God.

There is one declaration of the Angel very solemn, when swearing by him who liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are therein; he declares 'that time should be no longer.' How ready are we to forget this solemn truth in the midst of our many worldly engagements. Time is ours now, but how long it may be so, we cannot tell, for sooner or later this sentence shall go forth, that time shall be no longer. While time is ours, let us improve it; while there is time to repent and believe, let us not trifle. Eternity is rapidly approaching, and O how sad will it be to find, when time is no longer, that nevertheless we are unprepared to meet our God.

What the little book may mean, it is difficult to say; but the effects of it on John, when it was eaten, strikingly illustrate the deceitful character of sin. At first it is a sweet morsel, as sweet as honey, but soon it becomes fearfully bitter. Sin is just like

poison a little sweetened, or like a serpent harmless in appearance, but deadly in its sting. It promises bread, and it gives a stone; life, and it gives death. Let us evermore then learn to hate sin as that abominable thing which God hates, and which ruins man.

PRAYER.

O Lord, enable us now to draw near to the footstool of thy throne, remembering that thou art a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Enable us, O Lord, to confide at once in thy wisdom and love, and in our sweet experience may we feel, that through Christ thou canst be a just God and yet a Saviour. We confess, O Lord, that our faith is weak, and that we are ready to give way to the suggestions of unbelief, to walk more by sight than by faith, and thus sinfully to question thy truth and faithfulness. But, O Lord, do thou graciously forgive, and mercifully subdue our unbelief; and sooner may we believe that heaven and earth would pass away, than one promise of thine be unfulfilled, or one pledge unredeemed. May we have a sure and abiding interest in Christ, and serve him with a warm and unchanging love. May we so walk that those who are over us in the Lord may be enabled to give thanks, hearing of our faith and love toward the Lord Jesus and toward all saints. O Lord, be graciously pleased to strengthen the hands and encourage the hearts of all those whom thou hast made pastors in thy church. Remember also, O Lord, the dark places of the earth. Have mercy on those who are still worshipping stocks and stones, and bowing before gods which have eyes but see not, and ears but hear not. Make them willing in the day of thy power, and speedily bring them to bow the knee to Jesus. And, O Lord, we earnestly entreat thee to remember the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Send forth faithful and devoted men to seek their welfare. Yea, greatly bless all missionaries in their labours of love, whether preaching to Jews or Gentiles. Be especially gracious to all the members of this household. In rich mercy, do thou grant that all of us may belong to the household of faith, and the family of Christ. May our eyes be so opened, and our hearts so touched, that each of us may be able to say, My beloved is mine, and I am his. Accept, O Lord, of our thanksgiving for all thy goodness to us during the past day, for delivering us from evil, for protecting us from danger, and for all our temporal and spiritual comforts. Continue, O Lord, thy goodness to us; and with all thy blessings give us, we beseech thee, the bless-

ing of a grateful heart for all our mercies. Remember all that are in affliction, and suit thy grace to their wants, and bring to their remembrance all thy precious promises. Be thou the Father of the fatherless, the Husband of the widow, the orphan's stay, and the stranger's shield. Remember all thy gracious promises to them, and in their own experience may they know the Lord's unchangeable love and grace. May all their afflictions prove blessings, and by them all may they be led to a closer walk with God. Our waiting eyes, O Lord, are now towards thee, and our hope is in thy word. We plead no merit of ours, but place our entire reliance on the perfect merit of our Lord and Saviour. It is in his name we now approach, and now present these our petitions. O Lord, do thou graciously hear, answer, and forgive, for the Lord Jesus' sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRaise—PSALM CII. 13—18.

SCRIPTURE—ZECHARIAH I.

REMARKS.

The book of Zechariah is properly placed between those of Haggai and Malachi, for he was, in some respects, the colleague and coadjutor of both these prophets. We read in scripture of several persons of that name; but this Zechariah was the son of Barachias, or Barachiah, and a descendant of Iddo the seer. He seems to have been of the sacerdotal race. His name signifies the powerful mind of God; and the mind of Christ was largely revealed to him, and dwelt in him richly. He began to prophesy 'in the eighth month of the second year of Darius;' and as 'there was now no king in Israel,' he dates by the reign of the Persian monarch. He opens his commission, as we find in the second verse, by reminding the people that God had 'been sorely displeased' with their 'fathers;' and he thus intimates to them that, if they transgressed after the manner of their ancestors, they could not expect to escape similar punishment. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for who knows the power of his wrath? Yet he is merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and willing to save, even to the uttermost, all who turn unto him by humble faith and sincere repentance, as children to an offended father. 'Turn ye unto me,' he says, repeating his name and title as 'the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you.' The Lord of hosts speaks the same language to us, and waits to be gracious.

In the fifth verse the prophet reminds the Jews who had survived the captivity, that not only their fathers, but also the prophets who had warned them, were now no longer in the land of the living; but

he declared that the divine word had taken effect, and had been accomplished on their fathers; and that the great and solemn truth, that all must die and come to judgment, still remained, and should teach the living to learn wisdom. The prophets, though dead, yet still spake, and lifted up a warning voice, even from the recesses of the tomb. We are here taught, that while the goodness of man is as the flower of the grass, the word of the Lord abideth for ever. Let us all hearken to the voice of God speaking in his providence, in his word, and in the gospel ministry, lest death should overtake us in the midst of our sins unrepented of, lest the Lord of hosts should deal with us according to our ways and our doings.

Ver. 8—11. Here the prophet narrates a vision of mercy and deliverance to his 'kinsmen according to the flesh.' It was a vision of the night, and it is diversified by shades of obscurity. The mighty King of Zion, and great Head of his church, appears here, in regal pomp and majesty, as a victorious leader at the head of his legions, all in red array, and 'riding prosperously.' The Captain of our salvation is here represented as 'mighty to save,' and ever ready to defend his people, and to conquer all their enemies, yet, in some measure, hiding, at the same time, his power, and refraining from putting forth 'the greatness of his strength.' We are here taught that 'the Lord reigneth,' and that nothing is beyond his control, or hid from his all-seeing eye.

Ver. 12—17. The Angel of the covenant, the Messenger of the Lord of hosts, is here introduced as an earnest Intercessor with his Father in behalf of both Israel and Judah, and receiving answers of peace, for God is unwilling to give up either Ephraim or Judah, and returns 'comfortable words.' The period of captivity was closed; the time decreed for mercy had arrived; the indignation was past; Zion was to be comforted; the temple was to be finished; and Jerusalem, the city of the Lord, was to flourish as the grass; her suburbs were to be extended; and her children were to multiply exceedingly, and to replenish the land. For although there is a night of rebuke and of weeping, there is a morning of revival and of joy; let Israel, then, rejoice in his Maker, and 'let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.' For 'in Judah God is known; his name is great in Israel; in Salem, also, is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion.'

Ver. 18—21. The encouragement to the church of Christ is here repeated, and confirmed by a second vision of comfort, that of the four horns, and the four carpenters or smiths. Horns in scripture are symbols of strength; and we are here assured, that if there are horns of power to annoy and harass God's people, there are in his hands hammers of iron to break these horns, and to hinder them from doing any hurt. The horns of the wicked shall be cut off; but those of the righteous shall be exalted.

PRAYER.

Holy and heavenly Father, in whom the families of the earth are blessed, we bow with one accord before thy throne. We lament, O God, our

sins and our shortcomings before thee. Wert thou to mark iniquity, we could not answer thee for one, even the least, of the countless thousands of our transgressions. Enter not into judgment with us, we humbly beseech thee, for in thy sight can no man living be justified. May we be justified freely through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Create within us clean hearts and right spirits, sanctify us wholly, and let no idol of this world withdraw our hearts from thee, who alone art worthy of our highest adoration and supreme affection. Enable us to love thee supremely, and to walk in love to one another, as thou hast loved us, and hast given thy Son as a propitiation for our sins. Blessed be now the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for in him thou hast blessed us with all spiritual mercies ; and blessed be he who came in the name of the Lord to save us. Blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel, who hath visited and redeemed his people. Our souls magnify the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour, for he who is mighty hath done for us great things, holy, and excellent, and venerable is his name. When we consider the glory and majesty with which thou art invested, the spirituality and extent of thy law, the exceeding purity and breadth of the commandment, and, at the same time, reflect upon our own guilt and unworthiness, we have much reason to be covered with shame and confusion in thy holy presence, for our sins are many and aggravated. We have sinned with our fathers, and after the manner of their transgression. O mark not against us our sins, deal not with us according to our ways and our doings, but according to the multitude of thy tender mercies in Christ, even the sure mercies of David, and accept us in the Beloved. Make us more and more sensible of our danger, that we may flee to the stronghold which thou hast provided for the prisoners of hope ; and also of our disease, that we may apply to the sovereign Physician of souls for a remedy. Convince us more and more of our wants and our weaknesses, that we may come to thee in whom all fullness dwells, and with whom is everlasting strength. Make us deeply acquainted with our coldness and deadness in spiritual and heavenly things. Quicken us, and we shall be a family rightly calling upon thy name, and worshipping thee in spirit and in truth. We rejoice to know that thou, the Lord God omnipotent, reignest, that all things are under thy sovereign control, that nothing can befall to us without thy permission, and that thou makest all things to work together for good to those who love thee, and are the called according to

thy purpose. We pray for the peace and prosperity of our Jerusalem. Build up her walls, repair the breaches of them, and let the ark of thy covenant and of thy strength remain in her temple. May the Holy One of Israel be great in the midst of her, may her suburbs be extended, and may her children multiply and replenish the land. Visit the vine which thou hast planted ; let not the beasts of the forest or of the field trample upon it ; water it with dew from heaven ; may it extend its branches to the ends of the earth : and may generations yet unborn sit under its shade, and be refreshed with its fruit. Let thy watchful eye be upon us for good, guide us this day by thy counsel, prepare us for every duty and for every trial, and enable us to grow daily in grace and in meekness for thy heavenly kingdom and glory. Hear these our humble and united prayers, and give an answer of comfort and of peace, for the sake of Christ our Redeemer, whom thou always hearest, and to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be the glory for ever. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XXX. 3—6.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION XI.

REMARKS.

The design of God in the apocalypse, and other prophetic books, as Sir Isaac Newton observes, 'was not to make us prophets,' or to gratify our curiosity by enabling us to know things to come ; but that future occurrences might be interpreted after they have taken place, and that his foreknowledge, and not ours, might be thus manifested to the world. Events accordingly will, from time to time, open, in some measure, the seals of this mysterious book. The grand series of revolutions predicted by the holy prophets 'since the world began,' will at last be fully disclosed to view, and a glorious light thrown upon the magnificent scheme of providence from the beginning to the end. Till then we, who have not the gift of prophecy, must and ought to content ourselves with what has been already revealed by him who alone governs futurity, and hath put its 'times and seasons in his own hand.'

Ver. 1, 2. The prophet Ezekiel in his vision, to which St John here evidently alludes, had seen the Old Testament church hurt and harassed by Antiochus, and by various distressing causes ; and the prophet of Patmos here, in the visions of heaven, beheld the church of the New Testament troubled and tarnished by the cruelties and corruptions of antichrist, and by the multiplied defections and persecutions of the times. He receives a divine commission to measure the Christian temple, to notice what sacrifices were offered in it, what kind of fire burned on

its altar, and what was the number and the character of the worshippers. To all these things he was to apply the measuring reed, the perfect rule of God's holy word. We should consider that the great Angel of the covenant is still abroad in his church, giving commissions to his servants, ministers, and hearers, to take care that 'all things be done in order,' and according to 'the pattern' and the direction given by the sovereign Architect of the house, and Lord of the kingdom. If we walk not, in our different stations and circumstances, according to his divine rule, 'it is because there is no light in us.'

Ver. 3—7. In these verses we have the figurative life and death of the two prophetic witnesses, the eminent ministers of the word, and zealous defenders of 'the faith once delivered unto the saints.' The term *two* is sometimes used to signify a small number. When the widow of Zarephath said to Elijah that she was 'gathering two sticks,' she meant indefinitely a few sticks, with which to make ready the humble repast for herself and her son. A peculiar propriety has been noticed in the use of the number two here, for by the mouth of two or three witnesses, according to the law, every thing was to be established. Our blessed Saviour, it has been remarked, sent forth his seventy disciples 'two and two;' and power is here given to the witnesses, as our Lord gave to the seventy, to do wonderful things in vindication of the truth. By the divine authority which they had received, they went with a portion of the power and of the spirit with which Elias was favoured, and were thus mighty to pull down the strongholds of sin and of sinners, and to maintain 'the testimony of the Lord Jesus.' Those faithful witnesses were 'clothed in sackcloth,' as a token of the depressed condition of the church; and they continued testifying for twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days, or for so many years, even till the sounding of the seventh trumpet. They are represented as falling at last into the hands of their enemies and 'killed.' Thus we are apprized that the light of divine truth was, for a season, obscured, and its progress retarded. Truth may meet with temporary opposition and obstruction; but it is great, and sooner or later will prevail and be glorified. The gospel sun will ultimately shine forth in unclouded majesty, and will destroy the kingdom and power of darkness by the brightness of its shining.

Ver. 8—10. Wicked and ungodly men are here described as rejoicing and making merry over the martyred friends of the Redeemer, refusing sepulture to 'their dead bodies,' and 'sending gifts' of gratulation 'to one another' as tokens of their joy for their having overcome those 'right hearted men,' who had annoyed them by the 'fire' and force of sacred truth. He who is 'the faithful and true Witness,' says, 'because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' He says, 'in the world ye shall have tribulation; but be not afraid, I have overcome the world, and I have the keys of death and the grave.'

Ver. 10—15. We find here that, after a very short time, the dead witnesses are revived: 'The Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet.' When 'the Spirit quickeneth,'

this is to God's servants as 'life from the dead,' for then they 'renew their strength,' and proceed in their appointed work with new courage and constancy. They hear a voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up hither;' resume the station from which your enemies vainly imagined that they had pulled you down never to rise again. Occupy your former places, which shall be filled with others after you inheriting your zeal and faithfulness. 'The wicked shall see it and be grieved;' they shall, like Askelon of old, 'see it, and fear, and shall give glory to the God of heaven.' Thus we see that the woes of God's church shall at last pass away, and the light afflictions of his servants shall work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Let us hearken to the 'loud voices' of acclamation 'in heaven,' noticed in the fifteenth verse, and recognize the supreme dominion and sovereign power of Jehovah. Let us anticipate, in joyful hope, the blessed period when 'the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.'

Ver. 16—19. Here we have the triumphant thanksgivings and rejoicings of saints and angels on account of God's universal sovereignty, and for the victory of his truth over every form of Antichrist in the world. 'The nations' had been and still 'were angry' at the great things which God had done for his church and people, and they were now to suffer 'terrible things in righteousness,' as a just punishment for their cruel and 'ungodly deeds.' 'The temple of God,' which had for a time been comparatively shut, was now opened; the 'ark of the testament,' which had been, in comparison, concealed from general view, was now publicly 'seen;' the book of the divine word, which had been, in some measure, buried in the ruins of the temple, was now found, and given to be 'read of all men.' Good magistrates and good ministers are now appointed to watch, with one accord, for the good of the church of Christ, and for the peace of his Jerusalem.

PRAYER.

Infinitely great and gracious God, of whom, through whom, and to whom, are all things, and who alone art the worthy object of all religious worship, we would lift up our hearts with our hands to thee in the heavens, and offer unto thee our united homage, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving. Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Open our lips, and we will show forth thy praise. Look not on us as we are in ourselves; but look on the face of thy beloved Son, and our prayers shall come up before thee as a memorial, through his all-prevalent intercession. For his sake pardon all our sins, and receive us graciously, and love us freely. May he be made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; and may we receive him in all his offices and characters, and rest upon him alone, as he is offered to us in the gospel. Enable us to glorify thee our Father in heaven, and to adorn the doctrine of

God our Saviour. Enlarge our hearts, and we shall run the ways of thy commandments, which are all holy, and just, and good. Give us the knowledge of thee and of thy truth, which maketh wise unto salvation; the faith which worketh by love, and the love which casteth out every fear but that of offending thee. Give us the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, and the wisdom which cometh from above, and which is first pure, then gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of all good fruits. Give us what is good, whether we ask it or ask it not; and withhold from us what is evil, though in our ignorance we should ask it; and be ever gracious and bountiful to give us what is truly good for us in time and through eternity. We pray for the advancement of pure and undefiled religion in the world. May thy word have free course every where, and be glorified. Give thy Son the heathen for an inheritance. Have mercy on thy once chosen people, the children of Abraham, and bring in the Jews with the fullness of the Gentiles. Pour out thy Spirit on the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and open, on the high mountains of Israel, a fold for thy flock. We pray for our country, for the sovereign on the throne, and all subordinate magistrates, for the Christian church, and all the ministers of thy word. Pour oil into the lamps of thy sanctuary, that they may give light to all in the house. Put the Spirit of life into thy servants who minister in holy things. May they stand firmly on their feet, and deliver thy word with freedom and faithfulness, and may their report be received with meekness; and may thy arm be manifestly revealed by the number of those who have been turned unto righteousness. May the ark of thy covenant be seen in thy sanctuary on earth; and may we all be prepared to see it more perfectly in the holy place of the heavenly temple. Prepare us for joining in the triumphant song of the saints and angels above, who give blessing, and honour, and glory, to the Majesty of heaven for ever and ever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRaise—PSALM XLVII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—ZECHARIAH II. III.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In these two chapters we have two remarkable visions; the former, consisting of 'a man with a measuring line in his hand;' and the latter, 'of

Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.' Both symbolically import the restoration of the Jewish church and state to their pristine glory, in spite of earth and hell combined to oppose their growing prosperity under the fostering and protecting care of the Lord and his Anointed; and both point, not merely to the Jewish, but chiefly to the Christian dispensation, and to the conversion and restoration of the Jews in the latter day. To measure a place is a symbol of divine care and heavenly protection, Zech. i. 16; Rev. xi. 1. To measure Jerusalem, ver. 2, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof, symbolically imports what is declared in ver. 4, 5. 'Jerusalem shall be inhabited,' &c. 'For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and the glory in the midst of her.' Joshua in the 3d chapter, clothed with filthy garments, and hearing the Lord command that these filthy garments should be taken away, that a change of raiment be substituted in their room, and a mitre be set on his head, symbolically imports the same glorious truth; for God delights to comfort his people abundantly by giving them a succession of consolatory visions; and whereas Satan has to be rebuked, ver. 2. this shows that he is mightily opposed to the glory of the church, and would soon prove her ruin, were she not a brand plucked out of the fire by sovereign grace. 'Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?' In the latter part of the 2d chapter, the church is exhorted to deliver herself from Babylon, and to perfect the begun restoration; also to rejoice that the Lord dwelt in the midst of her as of old, and that many nations shall be joined to the Lord, 'in that day when he should inherit Judah, his portion, in the holy land.' This appears from ver. 7. 'Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwells with the daughter of Babylon;' also from ver. 10. to the end. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee,' &c. The same delightful truth is imported by the figurative language of the latter part of the 3d chapter. Here Christ is promised: 1st. Under the figure of a branch, ver. 8; 2d. Under the figure of a stone, and of a stone with seven eyes, a symbol of perfection; an engraven stone, a symbol of divine excellence, ver. 9; and, 3d. The glory of the church in the latter day; her rest from persecution; and the conversion of heathen nations are pointed at in the last verse. 'In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine, and under the fig-tree.'

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Here we learn: 1st. That God hath planted a church in the world, and that earth and hell are combined against her; but that she is a brand plucked out of the fire, and will ultimately prevail against all her enemies; 2d. That salvation is to be found in the church, and in her only; for her king is the Lord Jesus; he dwells in the midst of her; and he gives grace and glory to all his believing people; 3d. That we ought to inquire, whether we belong to the true church or not; whether we are on Christ's side, or on the side of his enemies; whether we are his sub-

jects, or the subjects of Satan; for in the one case we are secure for eternity, in the other we shall perish for ever with all his enemies, who shall be consumed before him as stubble before the devouring fire.

PRAYER.

O Lord, we bend the knee at thy footstool, and lift up our voice unto thee. Thou art the living and true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Father of angels, and of men; the first and last; the wisest and best, the holiest and greatest of beings. Every perfection is thine; all nature is subject to thy control; man alone is rebellious. Yet, O Lord, thou pitiest him, and hast sent forth thy Son to save him from eternal ruin, by calling him to repentance, faith, and prayer, in virtue of the great sacrifice of the cross. Our voice therefore, O Lord, shalt thou hear in the morning; in the morning will we direct our prayer to thee, and will look up. We approach thee, O Lord, this morning, in the name of Jesus Christ thy Son, and our adorable Saviour. We approach thee with the language of thanksgiving and praise. We bless, we magnify thy holy name together, for the mercies of the past night, for the light of another day, for life, health of body, soundness of mind, food, raiment, society, friends, relatives, and every worldly comfort; but more especially for spiritual mercies, for Jesus Christ thine unspeakable gift, and for casting our lot in a Christian land. We bless thee, O Lord, with grateful hearts, for pitying man in his low and lost estate; for sending the Son of thy love to suffer and die for his sins; and for planting a church in this rebellious world, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, which may be afflicted, but shall never be forsaken of thee; which may be persecuted, but shall never be destroyed; which though small in its beginning, shall be great in its increase, and glorious in its triumphs, subduing and filling the whole earth, of which thou hast spoken, saying, I will be a wall of fire around thee, and the glory in the midst of thee. We pray, O Lord, that we may be brought into thy church, and kept in it by the mighty power of thy grace. Father, we have sinned, and perverted our way before thee. We grieve, we mourn for our sins, which are many and great; and we desire to hate and forsake them, and to turn unto thee, unfeignedly, with our hearts. O Lord, we beseech thee to have mercy upon us. Blot out our sins, O divine Saviour, in thy most precious blood. Sanctify us, O thou Holy and Eternal Spirit; and purge our consciences, by the blood of Christ, from dead works, that we may henceforth serve thee in

righteousness and fear all our days. Grant us thy mercy, O God; and show to us thy salvation; then shall we praise thee with joyful lips. Extend, O Lord, we beseech thee, the borders of the Redeemer's kingdom. Bless the church which thou hast planted and watered with precious blood, and which thou hast sworn to defend against all her enemies. O give unto thy Son, the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. Fulfil all thy promises made to Christ, and to his believing people; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Pity, O God, we beseech thee, the perishing heathen; and O remember in mercy thine ancient people the Jews, and may it be given unto them, as here promised, to dwell in their own land, and worship under their own vine and fig-tree. Lord, be merciful to us this day, and O keep us in thy holy fear, and deliver us from all evil; for all we ask is in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, to whom, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, be praise and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM II.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION XII.

REMARKS.

This chapter contains a vision of the suffering state of the church of God, first, under Rome Pagan, and then under Rome Christianized, but holding the truth in unrighteousness. The former period extends to the conversion of Constantine, in the year 317; the latter embraces all that vast portion of time which is comprehended within the rise, the growth, the predominance, and the decay of popish error and popish tyranny. Like the visions in Zechariah which we have been considering, while it predicts a state of suffering, it also foretells a coming period of glory and triumph, for the gates of hell shall not prevail against her; in character it is similar to them, but it embraces a different section of the church's eventful and chequered history. The woman clothed with the sun, &c. is the true church, as consisting of genuine believers in the original promise; the child with which she travails in birth is Christianity, or Christ and his seed; the great red dragon, &c. is the Roman empire, while pagan and idolatrous; and the tail, which drew the third part of the stars, and did cast them to the earth, is the false religion which he taught and upheld. Whereas the dragon stood before the woman, to devour her child as soon as it was born, this imports the attempts that should be made by Herod, the Jewish sanhedrim, Nero, and others, to crush Christianity in its infancy; and whereas this child was caught up to God, and to his

throne, this signifies, that Christianity should be under the peculiar care and protection of heaven. But prior to the final triumph of the church, we are given to understand, by way of prolepsis, or anticipation, that she was to be in the wilderness, or in affliction, for 1260 years, as declared in the 8th verse. 'And the woman fled into the wilderness,' &c. Meanwhile there was to be war in heaven, or in the church, between her and the pagans, between Michael and his angels, and the dragon and his angels, or between the friends and the enemies of Christianity; and the result would be that paganism would be cast out of the councils of the Roman empire, ver. 9; which happened under Constantine the Great in the fourth century, ver. 10, 11. Then was heard great rejoicing in the church in consequence of this important victory obtained by the blood of the Lamb; and the praise of those is celebrated who loved not their lives unto the death, i. e. who suffered martyrdom for the testimony of Jesus. But this season of tranquility was not long to continue, ver. 12. 'Woe to the inhabitants of the earth,' &c. The cause of these new persecutions is still the dragon, i. e. the Roman empire as influenced by the devil, whose title is the old serpent, and Satan, who deceive the whole world; and whereas he carried on these persecutions after he was cast into the earth, this imports that he would find other means of persecutions than those councils of the Roman empire from which he was ejected, such as by dividing Christians, and arraying them against each other, and by stirring up the surrounding barbarians against them; all which has literally and fully been accomplished. Under these new persecutions the woman was to fly into the wilderness, ver. 14. by divine aid, and to be nourished there for 1260 years from the completion of her flight; though even there she is not to enjoy perfect repose, but quite the reverse; for though she is to be protected in her retreat, and nourished for better times, yet the dragon, ver. 17, is to make war with the remnant of her seed who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. The state of the church has long existed, and still continues. But the time is limited, and the Lord reigneth. Therefore let us rejoice, and patiently wait.

PRAYER.

The heavens declare thy glory, O Lord, and the firmament proclaims thy handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teaches us new knowledge of thee. Thou, O Lord, makest the mornings and the evenings to rejoice over us. Therefore, O Lord, do we humbly and reverently, in Christ Jesus our Lord, draw near to pay our evening tribute of adoration, gratitude, and praise; also to bewail our transgressions, and humble ourselves before thee; and fervently to implore pardoning mercy, sanctifying, consoling, and quickening grace, and eternal glory beyond death and the grave; as a free gift through the precious blood of thy dear Son. Accept now, O Lord, we beseech thee, our

heartfelt thanksgivings for all thy mercies, temporal and spiritual, manifested to us ever since we had a being. See our deep and unfeigned humiliation for sin. And O pity and forgive, for the sake of Christ's righteousness, for the sake of his incarnation, obedience, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and constant intercession at thy right hand. We admire and praise thee, O Lord, for all thy works, which are truly wonderful, but more especially for the stupendous work of human redemption. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to die for us, and to set up a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy, which shall terminate only with the world itself. Translate us, O God, most merciful, by thy Spirit, into this holy and happy kingdom. Clothe our souls with the bright robes of Christ's righteousness. Infuse also thy healthful grace into our hearts. Make us sons and daughters by adoption. Strengthen us to endure afflictions and temptations. Dispose and enable us to abound in good works. And O preserve us safe to thy heavenly kingdom, so that when we awake on the resurrection morn we may behold thy face in mercy, and be satisfied with thy likeness. Sensible, O Lord, of the great value of gospel blessings, we pray that thy Son's kingdom may be universally extended. O give thy Son the heathen for an inheritance. And let all his obdurate enemies and opposers speedily perish. We rejoice, O Lord, to know, that thy church is not always to abide in the wilderness; but is soon to come forth as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners. O! hasten the time, and let the song be sung again by multitudes in every land,—Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ, for the accuser of the brethren is cast down, who accused them before God day and night. Bless, O God, most merciful, all our brethren of mankind. Bless the sovereign, and all in authority. Bless our relatives, benefactors, and acquaintances. Visit the sick and afflicted with great compassion. Prepare the dying for death, and teach the living to be ever mindful of death and eternity. Dwell in this family by thy covenant-presence. May the Lord bless us, and keep us evermore; for all we now beg, is for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLVII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—ZECHARIAH IV. 7.

REMARKS.

The subject matter of these two chapters is distinct; but still the church in some one or other of her aspects is the important theme. In the former, by the golden candlestick is shadowed forth the good success which shall attend Zerubbabel's foundation of the temple; and by the two olive trees, the liberal supply of heavenly grace which should accompany the administration of divine ordinances in the second, as well as in the first temple. The whole is a vision or a representation of objects to the eye of the prophet, while he was perfectly awake. Ver. 1. 'And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, &c. A candlestick signifies in prophecy, a church. A candlestick, such as is described ver. 2, 3, imports a true church founded, nourished, and beautified by the Lord of hosts; or the Jewish church restored, built up, and made glorious after a long captivity. 'What are these, my Lord?' The answer is given in ver. 6—9, where we are plainly told that the candlestick, with the bowl, the seven lamps, and seven pipes, imports the restoration of the Jewish church, and the success that shall crown Zerubbabel's and Joshua's efforts in building the temple. And hereby the church is comforted and led to trust in Jehovah. Ver. 10. 'For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro over all the earth.' Whereas those lamps were supplied with oil from two olive branches, this signifies a plentiful supply of grace, primarily from Jesus Christ and from the Holy Spirit, the two anointed ones that stand before the Lord of the whole earth, as his servants in the grand work of human redemption; and secondarily, from Joshua and Zerubbabel, the two anointed ones that were raised up by Jesus Christ to be his representatives and instruments in the visible church. Ver. 11—13. 'What are these two olive-trees?' 'Then said he, These are the two anointed ones,' or sons of oil, 'that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.'

In the latter chapter we have two visions, a flying roll, and an ephah with a woman in the midst of it. The flying roll is described, ver. 2, as being twenty cubits long, and ten cubits broad; and as having, ver. 3, recorded upon it the curse of God against the various crimes to which the nation was addicted, such as lying, stealing, swearing, murder, and the like offences against God's holy law; but stealing and swearing are particularly enumerated, and only these as being more generally practised. The meaning of the symbol is, that God is the moral Governor of the universe; that his eyes are upon the ways of men, viewed nationally or individually; that stealing and swearing are grievous sins, and that his curse, ver. 4, shall remain in the midst of the swearer's house, or rather the perjured swearer,

and also the thief's, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof; not only in one place, in one city, or in one province, but through the whole breadth and length of the land, as signified by the roll not being stationary, but a flying roll. The ephah is described in ver. 6—8. The ephah is a measure containing ten omers. This ephah had a woman sitting in the midst of it, called Wickedness, denoting the injustice of their commercial dealings. A talent of lead, denoting the judgments of God, was lifted up, and cast upon the mouth thereof. Then the ephah, ver. 9, was lifted up and carried by two women with wings to the land of Shinar, and there established on its base, to intimate that if the Jewish nation should continue to be wicked as before, it should, as before, be uprooted and cast out, and set on its base in a far distant land; a prophecy which has been fulfilled, for the Romans came and took away their place and nation. O Lord, how unsearchable are thy judgments, and thy ways past finding out. Ver. 11. Surely thou hast built it an house in the land of Shinar, established it there, and set it there upon her own base.

PRAYER.

We rejoice, O Lord, in the morning light; for truly the light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun; and we desire to give thee hearty and unfeigned thanks for the mercies of the past night, for the light of a new day, for every worldly comfort, for every social blessing, for food and raiment, and all things which thou hast given us richly to enjoy. Much more, O Lord, would we rejoice in the light of the Sun of Righteousness, for truly his light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to behold his face in mercy; and we desire to praise, to magnify thy name, that he has risen upon us and our country with healing in his rays. O may he shine into our hearts this day by the light of his word and Spirit, to enlighten their darkness, to expel their fears, and to assuage their tumultuous sorrows. May he comfort our afflicted souls with the joys of his salvation; and may he turn away the flying roll laden with the curses of Jehovah from our doors, and from our persons and families. May our sun never go down, and may we rejoice in the salvation of the Lord evermore, saying, The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Lord, we have sinned and perverted our way before thee. We humble ourselves in thy holy sight, and greatly afflict our souls for sin, that abominable thing which thou hatest, for which Christ suffered, bled, and died; and for which he descended into the grave, that we might live eternally. Be merciful to us, O Lord, thine unworthy servants. Christ, be merciful to us, we beseech thee; and O plead our cause with the Fa-

ther, making mention of thy righteousness, and of thine only. Holy Spirit, be merciful to us, and make intercession within us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, be merciful to us sinners who trust in thee by virtue of the everlasting covenant; and O heal our backslidings, and love us freely; putting thy grace into our hearts, that we may no more wilfully offend against thee, no more handle the ephah of wickedness. Lord, remember, we beseech thee, thy Zion. Build up her walls, beautify her palaces, and strengthen her towers. May she speedily become the joy and refuge of all nations. We rejoice in what is written concerning her, Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. She was brought low by the sins of her people in the time of the captivity; but thou didst build her up again by thy servants Zerubbabel and Joshua; and thou art still feeding her with oil poured forth from the two olive-branches, the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth; and wilt feed her, we believe and trust, till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. Lord, hear this our cry, and let thine ear be attentive to the voice of our supplications. Lord, bless us and keep us. Lord, make thy face to shine upon us, and be gracious to us. Lord, lift up thy countenance upon us, and give us peace. And now unto God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be glory, honour, and praise, ascribed for ever and ever, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CII. 13.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION XIII.

REMARKS.

In this chapter two beasts are prophetically described, which are personally and specifically distinct, but politically and ecclesiastically blended together. The one is denominated the ten-horned, and the other the two-horned beast, because the former had ten, and the latter two horns upon his head, i. e. the one influenced, or was composed of ten kingdoms; the other influenced, or was composed of two sovereignties or kingdoms. The Roman empire when broken down into ten kingdoms by the invasions of the Goths and Vandals, in the fifth and sixth centuries, and afterwards compacted by the spirit of Popery into one living body in the eighth century, constituted the first; the regal and ecclesiastical empire of the bishops of Rome, when fully established in the same century, constituted the

second. From the 1st to the 10th verse, we have a prediction and description: 1st. Of the personal appearance and dreadful aspect of this monstrous beast. Ver. 1, 2. 'And I stood upon the sand of the sea,' &c.; and surely a beast more ferocious, more powerful, more dreadful, never existed before. 2nd. Of a terrible calamity that was to befall this monster in losing one of his heads, a calamity, however, which was speedily to be repaired, whereby new glory and a fresh accession of power were to accrue to him, insomuch that all the world wondered after the beast, ver. 3; a prediction which was accomplished in the revival of the Western empire in the person of Charlemagne, and in his political and ecclesiastical union with the bishops of Rome. 3d. Of his frantic and ferocious achievements against the saints of the Most High God, in his state of revived power and glory; such as speaking great things and blasphemies, making war against the saints and overcoming them, and exercising power over all kindreds, tongues, and nations. Ver. 4—8. A prophecy which has been accomplished in the history of Europe, Asia, and America, from the eighth century down to the present hour, in the history of Popish persecutions, of the Inquisitions, of the Crusades, and of the wars attendant on the Reformation; but still much remains to be fulfilled. This beast is to rage and be rampant for forty-two months, or 1260 years from the revival of the Western empire. Ver. 10. Then he is to go into captivity and be slain with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints, i. e. on this sure ground may the patience and faith of the saints be exercised.

From the 11th to the 18th verse, we have a prediction and description of the other beast, which had two horns like a lamb, but spake as a dragon, which well agrees with the bishops of Rome, politically and ecclesiastically viewed. This beast sprung up out of the earth, and not out of the sea, like the former; which description farther agrees with the rise and progress of Papal power, for it grew up insensibly among the ten horns after they had ceased from their commotions, and had settled down in their different provinces into comparative tranquillity and repose. Ver. 12—14. This beast, like the former, was to do great wonders, and exercise all the power of the first beast, a prediction which well accords with Popish influence over Roman Catholic kingdoms, with Popish arrogance and assumption of divine power, titles, and prerogative. Ver. 15—19. This beast was to be as bloody as the former, as tyrannical, and as overbearing; and who is ignorant of the exclusive, overbearing, tyrannical, and bloody character of Popery wherever it gains complete ascendancy? See a similar picture of him in 1 Thess. ii. 1—12. Ver. 18. Here is wisdom, or scope for the exercise of wisdom in finding out his name, nature, or duration, or all of them together, from his number, which is that of a man, (or which is used among men), and which number is 666. From this number, we learn that his name is the Latin beast, and that his nature is apostacy from the true faith. How long his duration will be, is elsewhere told, viz. 1260 years from the year 800, or the revival of the

wounded head or Western empire, in the person of Charlemagne.

PRAYER.

Lord God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, we worship thee. We adore thee as the true God, as the Father of our spirits, and the framer of our bodies. Early were we cast on thy divine care, and hitherto hast thou sustained us. How manifold, O Lord, are thy loving-kindnesses! They are new to us every morning, and thy faithfulness every evening; yea, every moment of our existence. We thank thee, O Lord, through Jesus Christ, for every one of them, and particularly for Jesus Christ himself, thine unspeakable gift to a lost and perishing world. O may we be saved by him from the wrath to come; and crown, we beseech thee, O Lord, the various acts of thy tender mercies, by bestowing upon us, though his infinite merits, everlasting life and unfading honours. Then shall we praise thee with hearts glowing with admiration, love, and gratitude, not only through the transient scenes of our earthly pilgrimage, but also through the ever-enduring ages of eternity, saying, Now, unto him that loved us, and washed us in his blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, be glory, honour, and dominion, for ever. Of the least of thy mercies, O Lord, we are utterly unworthy. Father, we have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight. Our sins are a burden too heavy for us to bear. We confess them. We mourn over them. We cry for help. We look, O God, to thy mercy in Christ. We look to Jesus as crucified for us. We look to the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ for sanctification. We look to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, for justification. Thus looking, O suffer us not to perish. Let us be as brands plucked from the fire. Let us be washed, let us be justified, let us be sanctified, by the blood of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of the living God. Lord, grant that all men may be brought along with us, our friends, relatives, acquaintances, and benefactors into the kingdom of Christ, set up from the beginning in this evil and rebellious world. And O let no weapon formed against it ever prosper. Bring down the man of sin, the two-horned beast that maketh war against the saints of the Most High. And with him, O Lord, bring down all those antichristian kingdoms that fight to uphold his spiritual despotism. We rejoice, O Lord, that thou reignest, that thou art able, and art pledged to bring down every power that exalts itself against thee and thine Anointed.

O hasten the time. Fill the earth speedily with thy glory. Bless our country. Bless our Sovereign with grace to reign for Christ. Dwell in this family. Watch over us this night. May goodness infinite and covenanted, be our portion in time and throughout eternity, for the sake of the merits of Jesus Christ, to whom, with thee the Father, and the ever-blessed Spirit, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII.

SCRIPTURE—ZECHARIAH VI. VII.

REMARKS.

In the first of these chapters God reveals himself, by his prophet, in two different attitudes: first, as the King of the whole earth indiscriminately, carrying on the government he administers, by the agency of his angels; and, second, as the King of saints, ruling the church through Jesus Christ, and raising it up to that universal dominion for which it is intended. The angels of the Lord are frequently, in scripture, compared to chariots, as in Psalm lxviii. 17; and the providences of God are also represented by the different colours of horses, as in Rev. vi. In the present chapter we mark the origin and course of all events. The decrees of God stand fast like the mountains, and are imperishable as mountains of brass. From this, as the spring, come forth the chariots of the Lord, his angels, to carry into execution what he has devised and decided. Yet while the various events of providence issue from the same fountain, they assume different aspects at different periods. Sometimes they are red, denoting indignation and wrath; sometimes they are black, denoting the sadness which chastenings bring; sometimes they are white, denoting the return of joy; and sometimes they are grizzled and bay, denoting an intermingling of evil and good in the destiny of man. Yet while we observe the varied dealings of God with the earth, let us rejoice in this, that all things are ordered by a wisdom that cannot err, and a love that never cannot be exhausted.

The concluding portion of the sixth chapter, contains a prophetic description of the building up of the church of God. The man whose name is the 'Branch,' even Jesus Christ, (see Isaiah xi. 1.) 'he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne.' Such a prediction of the coming glory and greatness of the kingdom of the Messiah, cannot but be highly consolatory to every genuine believer. Though the dispensations of providence, in regard to the church, may be often varied, and sometimes painful, yet can we look forward with joyful anticipation to the time when all the prophecies and promises of scripture shall have been fulfilled, when the heathen shall have been given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

In the seventh chapter, the prophet solemnly reproves the people for the hypocrisy of their religious professions. During the seventy years' captivity they had fasted and mourned; they had hung their harps upon the willows, and could not sing the songs of Zion in the land of the stranger. Even after that period their fasts continued to be observed, at least in so far as the external appearance went. But there did not accompany these the performance of those duties which are imperatively incumbent on all who profess to serve the Lord. For when they were exhorted to 'execute judgment, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother, and to oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor, they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.' Warned therefore by them, and applying to ourselves the solemn reproof and exhortation of this passage, let us strive to make principle and practice, profession and performance, go hand in hand, endeavouring by our walk and conversation to adorn the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 'Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. For many will say to me at that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works? to whom I will say, Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you.'

PRAYER.

Blessed be thy great name, O Lord, for the privilege we enjoy of drawing near to thee in the exercise of prayer, and making our requests known to thee. O that thy Spirit were poured out upon us as a Spirit of supplication, that we might be enabled thereby to approach thy throne in genuine devotion, and through Christ Jesus our Lord, to find acceptance in thy sight. We are not worthy, O God, of the least of all thy benefits. We are the sinful children of apostate fathers; and if thou wert to reward us according to our merits, thou wouldest banish us for ever to the place where thy mercy is unknown. Thanks be to thee for all thy great compassion, and for all thy tender mercies toward the children of men. Especially do we praise thee for all the goodness which thou hast caused to pass before us who now worship around thy throne. We rejoice that thou art the Lord God omnipotent that reigneth; that thy decrees stand like the mountains; and that thou hast ordered all things wisely and well. And though our experience in this world be varied; though we are in afflictions sometimes, and sorrow, and again are made joyful by the reception of thy bounty, we would learn, in whatsoever situation we are, therewith to be content; and we would pray that thou wouldest overrule all things for our good, even for the good of our immortal souls. We praise thee for the unspeakable gift of thy Son, and

for all the hopes and prospects which are opened up to us through him. We thank thee that thou hast opened up a way, by the shedding of the blood of the Lamb of God, whereby thou mayest justify the ungodly, and yet be the just God who hates sin and punishes transgressors. O that we were all enabled to receive him as he is offered to us in the gospel, as our prophet, our priest, and our king. O that we had an experimental acquaintance with him, and that we were enabled in truth to say of him, He is all our salvation and all our desire. Forgive, we beseech thee, the hardness of our hearts, and the rebelliousness of our lives; and pour out the influences of the Holy Spirit upon us to conform us to the image of Christ, and to receive him as all and in all to us. We bless thee, O Lord, for the high privileges with which we have been favoured. We thank thee that thou hast established thy church in the midst of us; and that Jesus, the Head of the church, is daily building up the temple of the Lord. We earnestly entreat that thou wouldest hasten the triumphs of the Redeemer's cause; that thou wouldest hasten the time when wickedness shall hide its face as if ashamed, and when all shall know the truth, and by it be made free. Break down whatever opposes the progress of the gospel, whether it be heathenish idolatry, Mahometan delusion, or popish superstition. Send forth thy light and thy truth, to scatter the darkness which broods over the hearts of the children of men. Let all the people praise thee, O Lord, let all the people praise thee. And may we, who profess to be thy servants, have grace imparted to us, to enable us to walk worthy of our vocation. May we avoid ungodliness, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present evil world, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Do thou take us, and all who are dear to us, under thy care through the course of the day which we now begin. May thy word be a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path, guiding us in the ways in which we should walk. May we be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Prosper, we pray thee, the works of our hands, that we may have wherewith to supply our own wants, and to minister to the necessity of the poor around us. The Lord be our portion, and the portion of our friends, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM II.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION XIV.

REMARKS.

The inspired writer having, in the preceding chapters, pointed out the great sufferings and trials of the servants of God, brings in this passage to open up to them a brighter and more pleasing prospect. In the 13th chapter we have an account given us of the rise and reign of antichrist, and of the power he should acquire, and the cruelties he should inflict upon the saints. In this chapter we are told of the downfall of Babylon, and the condition of the people of God, after the dominion of the man of sin shall have come to an end. The curtain which conceals the world of spirits from the view of mortals is again drawn aside, and John is again permitted to behold the state of things in heaven. The former vision was afforded him on the occasion of the downfall of pagan Rome after the church had waded through seas of blood; when he was shown the happy condition in eternity of those who had 'come out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' On the present occasion he sees the downfall of papal Rome, when he observes the same happy results; he beheld those who 'were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb;' and he 'heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps,' and singing 'as it were a new song before the throne.'

While thus the mind is delighted with these prophetic descriptions of the overthrow of superstition, and of the glorious state of those who have suffered for Christ's sake, we are not left in ignorance of the means by which God is to effect this deliverance for his church. Before the period come when it shall be said, that 'Babylon is fallen,' the everlasting gospel is to be preached unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. The darkness must depart as the light advances; the reign of antichrist must come to an end as the kingdom of Jesus progresses in its triumphs. Powerful and extensive as may be the present dominion of the enemy of Christ, yet the Lord has provided an instrument and agency, which feeble though it be in the estimation of the world, is yet destined, in the purposes of God, to undermine the bulwarks of Babylon, and lay them prostrate in the dust. The Redeemer is to ride forth in the chariot of the gospel, conquering and to conquer, subduing nation after nation, till the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and his Christ. When such assurances are given us of the triumphs of the cross, and such instructions as to the means whereby men are to be brought to the liberty of the children of God; let us regard it as our duty, as well as our privilege, to do what in us lies to hasten on the victory of the gospel, when it will be said, not only prophetically, but in reality, that 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.'

The concluding portion of the chapter, while it informs us of the blessedness of the dead that die in the Lord, contains fearful denunciations of divine wrath against those who shall worship the 'beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand;' and gives us in language, sublime and terrific, a description of the vintage when Christ shall come forth in his glory and power, to take vengeance of those who had served the beast. Let all who read, take warning. Whatever be the allurements with which antichrist may surround himself; whatever be the blandishments with which he would delude souls; let the children of men, warned by prophetic announcements of John, resist them all, resolving stoutly that they shall love the Lord their God, and that him only shall they serve. For whosoever serveth the beast, 'the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, thou who art the Father of the spirits of all flesh, unto thee would we lift up our souls in prayer. Who would not fear thee, O God, and glorify thee, for thou only art the holy One. Yet blessed be thy name, that whilst thou art great beyond all conception, and whilst we are wicked and unworthy creatures, it is yet our high privilege to approach thy throne as humble suppliants. Mercifully hearken to the voice of our evening prayers, and graciously pardon our numerous trespasses, dealing with us not according to our merits, but according to thy great compassion. O our God, we are ashamed, and blush to lift up our faces before thee, for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up into the heavens. Our understandings are darkened, our mind is carnal, our thoughts are evil, our affections are earthly; we have spoken frowardness; we have done wickedly; we have forgotten the God who made us; we have lightly esteemed the Rock of our salvation. Even during the day, now drawing to a close, we have sinned against thee, times without number. The good we would, that we have not done; the evil we would not, that we have done. Did we not say we would not transgress, we would not offend any more? Yet we have not performed the words of the covenant which we made before thee, but as treacherous dealers we have dealt treacherously. For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon our iniquity. O let us have the blessedness of those whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered, to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. O let us have redemption through Christ's blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of thy

grace. Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us salvation. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with his benefits. The candle of the Lord hath shined upon our head, and by his light we have walked through darkness, and the secret of the Lord has been in our tabernacle. We will extol thee, our God, O King, and will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will we bless thee, we will abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and sing of thy righteousness. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ. We receive it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Glory be to God in the highest, there is on earth peace and good-will toward men. O that we all may be savingly interested in that glorious work which Christ accomplished on Calvary with his agony and blood. Grant us an increase of faith, that more firmly and fondly than ever we may be able to lay hold on Jesus as our only refuge. And give us to be crucified with Christ, so that the life we now live in the flesh, we may live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us. May the privileges we so richly enjoy, be likewise extended to others. Lord, teach transgressors thy ways, and let sinners be converted unto thee. Let the word of God prevail to the pulling down of strong holds, and the casting down of imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and let every thought be brought into obedience to Christ. Let the people which sit in darkness see a great light, and to them which sit in the region and shadow of death, let light spring up. And now, Lord, we commend us to thee. Thou art our refuge, and our strength. The Lord watch over us, even he that keeps Israel, and neither slumber nor sleeps. The Lord be our shade on our right hand, that the sun may not smite us by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord preserve us from all evil, the Lord preserve our souls. The Lord preserve our going out and coming in, from this time forth, even for ever more, for Christ Jesus' sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXIII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—ZECHARIAH VIII.

REMARKS.

The mode of procedure adopted by God in his dealings with the Jews, as recorded in this chapter, is deserving of serious consideration, not merely on account of the insight it gives us into the details of their history, but because it makes us acquainted with certain principles which admit of the strictest application to the circumstances of the people of God in all ages of the world. First of all, there is a succession of rich and comfortable promises granted to the remnant of Israel amid the miseries of their captivity at Babylon, and opening up before them the bright prospect of their re-occupying the streets of Jerusalem, with the full enjoyment of the divine blessing, and amid the manifest tokens of a state of the highest external prosperity. But observe next, how it was that these promises were to be carried into accomplishment. It was not by means of the direct agency of Almighty God, whilst the children of Israel themselves were either following after their idols, or remaining in a state of passive indifference. On the contrary, they were called to be workers together with God; and therefore, and for that purpose, they were commanded to be strong in the building of the temple of the Lord; and it was just in the vigorous prosecution of that great work, the neglect of which had already subjected them to many signal judgments, that they were actually to realize the state of unexampled prosperity depicted in such glowing colours before them. And finally, it deserves to be noticed, that the building of the Lord's house, with the consequent administration of the ordinances of God, was so to bear both on their condition as a prosperous people, and on their character as a people zealous of good works, as to attract the favourable notice of other men, and thereby render them instrumental in extending the religion of the living and the true God to all nations of the earth.

How far these principles have already been realized in the experience of the Jews, and how far, and in what way they yet remain to be carried into accomplishment in the course of their future history, are points into which we cannot at present enter. But the principles themselves, whether viewed in their application to the circumstances of the Jews, or brought to bear on that branch of the Christian church to which it is our own privilege to belong, are of great practical importance. The treasury of God is as full now as it ever was of exceeding great and precious promises. But if we would draw them out, and regale ourselves with their bright prospects, and with the plenitude of their consolations, then on our part there must be a building of the Lord's house; a fervent zeal for the establishment of the services of the sanctuary, and a diligent waiting upon God in the way of his instituted ordinances. The church that is devoting itself to such a work may, like the persecuted remnant of Israel, be compassed about with mighty difficulties; but if even in troub-

lous times, and amid the assaults of mortal enemies, the building of the walls of Zion be steadily advancing, then of this we may rest assured, that against that church the gates of hell shall never be able to prevail, and not only so, but we may confidently expect that it will be honoured in diffusing the blessings of prosperity over the land, whilst it operates, as an instrument in the hands of God, in extending the knowledge of salvation to the remotest corners of the earth.

PRAYER.

Most merciful Father, we praise and magnify thy name for the rich provision thou hast made for the well-being of thy church, even in dark and troublous times; for the exceeding great and precious promises of thy word; for the sweet and refreshing consolations of thy Spirit; for the bright prospects of the coming glory; and for all the lessons of instruction embodied in thy procedure in the days of old with the seed of Abraham thy servant. May thy Spirit enable us to form right conceptions of the wisdom and rectitude of all thy dealings; and seeing that blindness hath now happened in part, even to the very people to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose were the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever; and that by reason of their fall salvation hath come unto the Gentiles; O preserve us from the guilt and devices of an unbelieving spirit, lest our provocations also should, in like manner, bring down upon us the vengeance of thy righteous judgments. But grant rather, that impressed with a sense of our solemn responsibility, and alive to the value of our religious privileges, we may be enabled diligently to improve them in this the day of our merciful visitation, that so the gospel, which has been unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, may become unto us the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto our salvation. Nor let the influence of these high privileges be confined altogether to ourselves. Let ours be the honour of co-operating with thyself in the building up of the walls of Zion, that so the enlargement of thy church may not only diffuse the blessings of external prosperity over the land, but be rendered instrumental in the bringing out of all nations of many sons and daughters unto glory. Have mercy especially on thine ancient people. O grant that the vail may be removed from their eyes, that they may look upon him whom they have pierced, and may mourn, and be in bitterness for him as one mourneth and is in bitterness for an only son; that so thou mayest

conduct them to the fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness, whilst in that day thou puttest the song of the prophet into their lips. O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength, and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation. Accept of our thanks for thy goodness to us through the night. Be with us during the course of this day. Assist us in the faithful discharge of every duty, in the vigorous resistance of every temptation, in the patient endurance of every trial. And hear us, and accept of us, and bless us, not because of any merit that belongs to ourselves, for in ourselves we deserve not the least of all thy mercies, but only for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son, with whom thou art always well-pleased, and whom thou hearest always. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXVIII. 22.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION XV. XVI.

REMARKS.

These are solemn chapters. Judgments of tremendous import form the subject to which they relate. And from the deep recesses of eternity the notes of awful warning break like thunder on the heart.

It would seem as if there were some dread commotion in heaven. For what mean the mustering of those victorious hosts on the sea of glass that is mingled with fire; the loud thunders of adoration which the congregated armies of heaven are sending forth with an air of triumph before the throne; the dense clouds of smoke filling the whole temple which at other times is illuminated with the light of the glory of the Lord; the loud voices calling to the angels to go their ways and to pour out upon the earth the vials that are full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever? Wherefore these portentous signs in heaven; these solemn movements among the ministering spirits that are within the vail; these voices issuing, like the noise of many waters, from the temple, and from the throne of God? Mark! It is for the overthrow of Babylon the great; for the destruction of antichrist; for the perdition of the man of sin. What an arresting consideration! Let us ponder it with all seriousness of mind; nor let us ever forget the solemn lesson which it teaches. Amid the lax principle and the spurious liberality of the present day, it is but too common for professing Christians to look upon all systems of religion,

however monstrous, as if they were entitled to equal countenance, nay, even to contemplate with a spirit of what the world calls charity, the very antichrist that is usurping the dignities of Christ's crown; the mother of abominations, that is drunk with the blood of saints. But can this be the charity that cometh from above? No such thing. The charity that cometh from above is love for the souls of men; love for the purity of eternal truth. But that truth it is the province of antichrist to extinguish; these souls it is the aim of the man of perdition to destroy. And what sort of charity is that? It may be the charity that passes current in a world that lieth in wickedness; the charity which stript of its integrity, and clothed in the vile guise of a traitor, can betray the Saviour with a kiss; the very charity which exists in all its liberality in the spirit of that great adversary, who puts the gloss upon all falsehood, and grants the toleration to all corruption, while at the same time, he is going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. But there is no such charity, nor any thing that bears the faintest semblance to it in heaven. No trace of it among the hosts that are standing on the sea of glass, praising God for the truth and righteousness of his judgments; no trace of it among the angels, who, amid the dire commotions of thunder, and lightnings, and great earthquakes, are discharging the vials of God's wrath upon the men that have the mark of the beast, and that worship his image; no trace of it in the bosoms of the martyrs who were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus, and who, from amid the solemn precincts of another world, and from beneath the very altar, are crying out with loud voices unto God in these awful and soul-arresting words; 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth.'

Therefore, we conclude, that the man who is at peace with antichrist, in love with the abominations of popery, or in league with any system of religion opposed to the principles of eternal truth, can have no community of feeling with the purest intelligencies of heaven. And if the prayer do ever pass from his lips; 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' he is pronouncing sentence of condemnation against himself, and whilst conniving at the guilt of Babylon's sins, he is virtually invoking a share in the vengeance of Babylon's plagues.

PRAYER.

O Lord, most holy and true, we desire, this evening, in presenting ourselves before thy throne, to have our minds so imbued with the sentiments of thy holy word, that we may stand greatly in awe of thy Majesty, and of thy terrible judgments. Thou art indeed to be feared, and to be had in reverence of all that are round about thee, for thou art a most holy Lord God, who takest vengeance of men's inventions, and who wilt by no means give thy glory unto another. O forbid that we should ever be found in the position of stout-hearted and impenitent sinners, who

are either far from righteousness, or wandering in paths of darkness or delusion, refusing to come to the light lest our deeds should be reprov'd, and seeking shelter to ourselves in refuges of lies. In thy great mercy do thou deliver us from all blindness of understanding, and from all callousness of heart, and from all sear'dness of conscience, and from all waywardness of affection, and from all systems of falsehood or corruption, that would keep us at a distance from the great Redeemer, whom thou hast revealed to guilty and miserable sinners as the way, and the truth, and the life. And so vouchsafe to us of the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that sitting at his feet with the docility of little children, we may be brought to the knowledge of the truth, and made wise unto salvation. And grant, that counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, we may win him, and be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith, that so we may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and be made conformable unto his death, and attain unto the resurrection of the dead, and be finally admitted into the kingdom of heaven. Nor suffer us at any time to be indifferent to the purity of eternal truth, or regardless of the glory of the Redeemer's cause. Looking frequently within the vail, and beholding the ministering spirits that are pouring out on the earth below, vials that are impregnated with wrath for the destruction of sinners, as well as laying on the altar above, censers that are filled with the prayers of saints; may it be given to us to embody in our own characters somewhat of their fervent charity towards all that is holy, and just, and true, blended with their righteous zeal against all that is base, and abominable, and false. And O grant thy people every where being stirred up, not only to pray, but to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, that all obstacles to the progress of the truth may be removed; that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified amongst all nations, that so the blessed era may come speedily, when the power of antichrist shall be utterly destroyed, and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the whole earth. Father of mercies, for the blessings of the week now drawing to a close, we render unto thee, as is most due, the devoutest gratitude of our hearts. Take us, and ours, under thy protection, during the silent watches of the night. And grant that, being refreshed with the sleep which thou pro-

misest to thy beloved, we may arise in the morning impressed with a sense of thy great mercies, and prepared for joining without distraction of spirit, and with all our hearts, in the solemn and delightful services of another day of the Son of man. And all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK.

SABBATH MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLVI. OR CXLVII.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CXLVI. CXLVII.

REMARKS.

How cheering, to every true believer, is the view given in these psalms of the character of that great Redeemer into whose hands he hath intrusted all his interests, and who reigneth over Zion throughout all generations. And how striking the contrast between the glorious majesty of his kingdom, and the pomp and pageantry of the mightiest of earthly kings? Man, even when raised to the elevation of a throne, and invested with the dignity of a crown, is but moving in a vain show. His foundation is in the dust. He is crushed before the moth. The issue of a moment may strip him of his royal prerogatives, and turn him into a mass of dust and ashes, cold, senseless, inanimate, fit only to be removed from the sight of living men, and given up as a worthless and a loathsome thing to the darkness and corruption of the grave. Well, therefore, might the psalmist exclaim, 'Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help; his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish.' How different with the divine Redeemer, and how blessed the condition of the man who is making him the portion of his soul! He needs not to be ashamed of his confidence, and will never be confounded, world without end. The Saviour in whom he trusts presides over the mightiest operations of the universe; for he covereth the heavens with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth, and maketh grass to grow upon the mountains, and giveth to the beast his food, and telleth the number of the stars. And not only so, but his tenderness is equal to his almightiness; for he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel, and healeth the broken in heart, and raiseth them that are bowed down, and relieveth the fatherless and widow, and executeth judgment for the oppressed, and taketh pleasure in them that hope in his mercy. Well, therefore, might the psalmist again exclaim, 'Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord his God.'

Have we committed the keeping of our souls into the hands of a Being so full of tenderness, and so mighty to save, then with us verily it is well. Not a hair can fall from our heads without permission from the very Being who sits on the throne of the

universe, bearing on his shoulders the government of eternity. And whatsoever be the rugged paths through which we are conducted, the trying circumstances into which we are brought, or the dark prospects that are opened up before us, we need not doubt that, his everlasting arm being round about and underneath us, we shall be kept from the snares of the destroyer, and conducted by his mighty power through faith unto everlasting life.

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, who art ever to be sought after in the way of thine appointment, we come unto thee on this the morning of thy holy day, specially imploring that thou wouldest send down upon us a large portion of thy Spirit, to sanctify us for the solemn services in which thou invitest us to engage. O forbid that we should ever be tempted, either by the force of our own corruptions, or by the allurements of a world lying in wickedness, to cast contempt on any of the ordinances which thou hast established, or be led to engage in them with a spirit of carelessness or formality, lest they should become the savour of death unto death, instead of the savour of life unto life. But entering into the courts of thy house with true hearts, and in the full assurance of faith, may we be enabled to worship thee, who art a Spirit, in spirit and in truth, offering to thee the sacrifices of righteousness, and rendering the glory that is due to thy great name. This day especially may we attain to some elevated conceptions of the power, and tenderness, and eternal Godhead of that great Redeemer, who reigneth over Zion throughout all generations. Whatsoever be the number, the variety, or the urgency of our wants, we rejoice that we have access to the very Being who regulates the movements of all worlds, whilst he attends to the interests of the humblest of his people. May he be the propitiation for all our sins, and the foundation for all our hopes, and the fountain of all our consolation; and coming to him, in his ordinances, with simplicity of faith, and with enlarged desires, may we be so relieved from the pressure of our burdens, so cleansed from the pollution of our sins, and so replenished with the fatness of his house, that we may go forward on our way rejoicing, adorning the doctrine of Jesus Christ our Saviour in all things, and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness which are to the praise and glory of God. Father of mercies, and God of all grace, who lovest the gates of Zion, yet despisest not the dwellings of Jacob, look thou with an eye of tenderness on all afflicted and sorrowful spirits shut out this day from the precious ordinances of thy house, and lying upon beds of languishing.

of death. Amid the multitude of their anxious and disquieting thoughts, let thy sweet comforts replenish and delight their souls. Grant, especially, that the angel of the everlasting covenant may be with them, even he upon whom thy Spirit hath descended, because thou hast anointed him to preach good tidings into the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to comfort all that mourn, to give unto them that mourn in Zion beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Even amid their silent and their solitary sabbaths, may they hear his blessed voice saying to them, Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. And grant that, entering freely into spiritual fellowship with him, they may be so comforted amid all their tribulations, and so animated with the hopes of the future glory, that, forgetful of their miseries, they may be joyful upon their beds, singing aloud the high praises of God, and feeling in their very hearts that their light affliction, which is but for a moment, is not worthy to be compared with the glory that is yet to be revealed. The angel that walketh amid the golden candlesticks be present this day in all the churches throughout the Christian world, that so the voice of rejoicing and salvation may be heard in all the tabernacles of the righteous. And let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, find acceptance in thy sight, through Jesus Christ, our strength, and our Redeemer. Amen.

SABBATH EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLVIII.

SCRIPTURE—PSALMS CXLVIII. CXLIX. CL.

REMARKS.

These are not like the strains of a lyre that was ever hung in sadness, or in silence, on the willows by the waters of Babylon. It would seem rather as if the psalmist had risen on the wings of an eagle into heaven, and tuned his harp amid the symphonies of blessed spirits, on the banks of that mighty river that maketh glad the city of our God above. For truly it is a sublime and celestial conception that is embodied in its final notes of melody. The entire universe appears as if transformed by his sanctified imagination into one vast and magnificent temple for the celebration of Jehovah's praise. Even the floods, and the fruitful trees, and the everlasting hills, and every element of nature, and all the stars

of light, are at once invested with the attributes of living creatures, and animated with the spirit of adoration. And the earth below, with all that it contains, whether animate or inanimate, is summoned to arise and to join in concert with the heavens above, and with all their hosts, in rendering glory unto him that sitteth upon the throne for ever and ever.

This is just as it ought to be. It is in perfect harmony with the new order of things which it is the beneficent design of the great Redeemer to bring about. And the privilege, granted to sinful and miserable beings such as we are, of engaging, even now, in the same kind of exercises which form the main employment of the worshippers before the throne above, is one assuredly that is fitted to exercise a most ennobling influence on the mind, whilst it awakens in the heart, that rightly understands it, the most overpowering conceptions of the manifold wisdom of God.

What then is the state of our hearts? Are they rightly estimating and realizing this exalted privilege? If they are not, there cannot be a doubt, that we are outcast and alienated beings, estranged from the spirit whereby all the sanctified on earth are brought into communion with all the sanctified in heaven. And that being the case, our hearts must be filled with guilt, and disorder, and misery, unprepared for the duties which belong to the relationships of earth, having no sympathy with God, no fellowship with angels, no meetness for heaven.

But is praise the very element in which we live, and move, and breathe, then ours, even now, is the spirit of heaven. And in that case, we have a fellow-feeling, not only with all the saints of God that are upon earth, but with the great multitude whom no man can number, that are worshipping before the throne, and with the angels and the archangels, and with the cherubim and the seraphim; with the crowned heads and the high nobility of heaven. What a dignified position, and how solemn the obligations which it involves! Let us see, then, that we adorn our relationship with beings of such stupendous power, and purity, and glory. And, instead of grovelling in the dust, or polluting ourselves with the world's abominations, let us comport ourselves with the dignity and elevation of spirit that are suited to our rank, remembering, evermore, that if we belong to the family of God that is upon earth, we are also, and at the same time, incorporated with the family of God that is in heaven.

PRAYER.

O Lord of hosts, who dwellest in the high and holy place, seated on the throne of the universe, and inhabiting eternity with all its glories, condescend, in thy great mercy, to touch our hearts, this evening, as with a live coal from off thine altar, that so they may be stirred up with all that is within them to the celebration of thy praise. It is a privilege altogether inestimable, that thou invitest us to come, even in the character of needy and miserable suppliants, to the very

throne on which thou art seated, because if we ask in faith thou hast promised to give to us the blessings that we need, both for the world that now is, and for the world that is to come. But wherewithal shall we extol the riches and liberality of thy grace, in calling us to aspire also to the spirit of adoration, and thus permitting us to take a part in the highest of all the exercises in which it is possible even for unfallen intelligences to engage! Yet we lament that our hearts are so indifferent to the value of this high privilege, and that even on the day specially set apart for thy worship there is so little in common between us and the glorified hosts, who are serving thee day and night in thy temple, singing for ever, without distraction, and without weariness, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come! O that our hearts were so enlarged in the range of their desires, and so expanded with all the fullness of God, that we might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ours, even now, may be the spirit of heaven, making us joyful in the house of our pilgrimage, and furnishing the prelude and preparation for the new song which shall be sung for ever before the throne above, unto him that hath loved us, and given himself for us. Follow with thy rich blessing all the religious exercises in which we and thy people throughout the Christian world have this day been engaged. Whatever salutary impressions have been produced, do thou strengthen and confirm more and more; and give us grace to carry the influence of our religious exercises wherever we go, that in all the business of life, and in every relationship, and in all that we do, we may let our light so shine before men that they may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus; and grant also, that by means of the services of every successive sabbath that we spend on earth, our souls may approximate to a greater meetness for the enjoyments of that sabbath above, which shall be without weariness, without sadness, and without end. And now, O Lord, let thy blessing be upon us, and upon all in whom we are interested. Let thy blessing be upon our sovereign; let thy blessing be on our senators, that they may be guided by the wisdom that cometh from above; on our magistrates, that they may be a terror to evil doers, and in all things a praise and protection to those that do well; on our ministers, that the pleasure of the Lord may prosper greatly in their hands; on the great body of the people, that they may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty; on

the poor, the comfortless, the bereaved, the tempted, and the dying, that the joys of the Lord may be their strength and their song; let thy blessing be upon ourselves, in soul, and in body, and in spirit, that we may be thine amid the watches of the night, thine amid the light of the morning, thine during the future course of our pilgrimage, thine in the day of our prosperity, thine amid the swellings of Jordan, thine in the morning of the resurrection, thine in the day of judgment, and thine for ever. And unto him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, be all the praise, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE XVIII.

SCRIPTURE—ZECHARIAH IX. X.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In these chapters, the sacred writer follows out the grand burden and design of his prophecy. This had respect, more immediately, to the events concomitant or consequent upon the restoration from Babylon, but in the remoter distance to ulterior destinies of Israel; and there are two intimations of God, in the earlier part of the book, which furnish the key to its outline and method. The first of these is the announcement, 'I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies,' chap. i. 16; the second, the language in chap. ii. 9, I will shake mine hand upon the nations which spoiled you. In accordance with this analysis of the prophecy, the first eight chapters are occupied mainly with the reviving hopes of Israel. In the ninth, the prophet enters on the detail of the judgments awaiting their enemies. He predicts disaster to Hadrach, a region of Syria, and, more especially, to Damascus its capital, ver. 1; to Hamath, another region of Asia Minor, ver. 2; to Tyre and Zidon, ver. 2—4; to Philistia, ver. 5, 6. These predictions were soon after signally fulfilled. Alexander the Great subjugated Syria, and pillaged Damascus; took Tyre, notwithstanding the strength of its insular position, and destroyed it by fire; subdued Philistia, and made Ashdod, one of its most renowned cities, the seat of foreign rule. A striking contrast to these calamitous visitations was vouchsafed in the case of the Jews. The conqueror, approaching at the head of his victorious armies, was so propitiated by the intercessions of Jaddua the high-priest, that he issued orders that not one hostile footstep should profane the thresholds of Jerusalem, verifying thus memorably the divine assurance, 'I will encamp about mine house,' ver. 8. But the prophet is not content with dwelling on Israel's exemption from the doom and disaster of their enemies. He hails, in the ecstasy of prophetic

anticipation. the era of Israel's brightest triumphs, when he who was the hope, the consolation, the glory of Zion, was to appear; and, in language not more fraught with literal adaptation to special incidents in the Messiah's history, than with beautiful prefiguration of the spiritual nature of his kingdom and conquests, expatiates on the gladsome trophies of an era which was not unworthy of being introduced in the jubilant language, 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, for behold thy King cometh unto thee.' In the 10th chapter, under a significant allusion to the then urgent circumstances of the Jews, he adverts to the copious outpouring of spiritual influences awaiting the latter times of the Jewish history. It had been the experience of Israel before their captivity, that the fructifying rains were withheld, so that their heaven over them became as brass, and their earth beneath as iron. But the prophet was now commissioned to assure them that their supplications for this boon should no longer be unavailing, ver. 1. And, following out the parallelism of spiritual dispensations, the admonition was significant to the house of Jacob, to improve the ample power of new covenant blessings awaiting new testament times; those times when, as respects the Jewish community, it could be said that the fields were 'white already to the harvest.' He then admonishes them of what had been the bane of Jacob—their tendency to take other counsel than God's; the disastrous effects of this, in the scattering of the flock, as if they had no shepherd; a description significant in Zechariah's times, still more significant in the times of our Lord, ver. 2. He explains God's dealings, that his indignation was chiefly armed against the teachers and the rulers, (the shepherds and the goats,) because, though a people cannot be held guiltless in following bad counsel or example, the more aggravated guilt is their's who mislead them, ver. 3. He finally launches into a field of bright anticipation, in respect to the future prosperity and blessedness of Israel, ver. 5—12.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us take heed that we do not range ourselves among the enemies of God, for he will shake his hand against such. Let us see to it, on the other hand, that we improve our day of visitation, 'that we ask of the Lord rain in the day of latter rain.' Let it not be our condemnation, that a gospel day should be fraught with rich pledges of the Spirit's effusion, and that we should disown that fervent importunity with God which our blessed Saviour admonishes, when he says, 'if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them who ask him.'

PRAYER.

O Lord, who art the confidence of thy people, and the confusion of thine enemies, we come this morning to seek the hiding place of thy grace. We confess before thee our sins, and our manifold provocations, walking contrary to thee, as

we have done, and rebelling against thee, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments. And we have to lament that every day brings us fresh occasion for shame and confusion of face in thy presence, adding, as it does, to the catalogue of our offences. Deal not with us, we entreat thee, according to our iniquities; for if thou rise up against us to execute judgment, we cannot answer thee for one of a thousand. We cast ourselves on thy free pardoning mercy in Christ Jesus the Lord. O may his blood be the cleansing of all our sins. We come to thee also to ask the renewal of our hearts. We have occasion to testify and make complaint against ourselves, that while God is entitled to all our heart, and soul, and mind, other objects and other influences steal in upon our affections and estrange them from thee. O let us not thus continue to be a reproach to ourselves, and a living offence against the claims which thy transcendent, thine infinite mercy, has established upon our gratitude. Bestow upon us, we beseech thee, that effectual teaching and operation of thy Holy Spirit, which shall ensure all our affections to God, and enlist all our energies to thy service. We take the more encouragement to prefer this petition, for thou hast invited us to ask rain in the time of the latter rain. Come thou down, then, with such copious spiritual effusions as shall be to us like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. So that our Christian graces and virtues shall revive, and grow, and expand, and yield much fragrance. We pray for thy blessing this day upon this family. Be their God. Vouchsafe to them thy counsel. Uphold them by thy grace. Direct them in the active duties of life. Protect them from its temptations and dangers, and may they, from stage to stage of their sojournings, have occasion to adopt the memorial, Hitherto the Lord hath helped us. All we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM xcvi. 1.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION xvii.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

This chapter is substantially a supplement to a preceding portion of the book. It contains a digression from the chain of the prophecy; and its object is very plainly intimated to be a fuller development of what had previously been foretold, the doom of mystical Babylon, 'I will show unto thee the judgment

of the great whore.' The chapter divides itself into two parts; the former occupied with significant prophetic emblems, the latter with an inspired comment on these emblems. The epithet by which Babylon is here styled, points, in the very threshold, to an apostate church. The church is espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ; and whatever shall belie the sanctity of this contract is spiritual adultery. The scarlet-coloured beast is an emblem of the secular power by which this apostate church has been supported and aggrandized; and subsequent notices of the chapter make it manifest that this is no other than Rome. The voluptuousness, the opulence, the ambition, the licentiousness, the pollutions, the persecuting genius of the papal church, are strikingly imaged in the succeeding verses, 4—6. The glossary to the symbols, furnished in the latter part of the chapter, releases us from much vagueness of conjecture. The seven mountains on which the ecclesiastical tyranny seats itself, find literal coincidence with the seven hills on which Rome was built; and when associated with the intimation made in the closing verse of the chapter, dissipate the last shadow of uncertainty. It may simply be asked, of what city but one in John's time, could it be said, 'that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth?' But a further key is afforded us. The seven heads, we are told, have another symbolical meaning, they signify seven kings, or forms of government. And, accordingly, taking John's time as our point of chronology, five forms of Roman government had then fallen, or were extinct, viz. kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, and military tribunes; one subsisted, viz. emperors, and one had not yet come. The profound mystery of the prophecy is associated with that aspect of the Roman polity which had not yet come. The prediction makes it perplexing, for it speaks of it as continuing only for a short time; as so anomalous that while, in one view, it might be termed the seventh form of Roman government, in another it was to be treated as a cypher in the national annals, and to be superseded and merged in another form, of which it could be said, 'It is of the seven,' ver. 11.

History makes it perplexing, for while there is no difficulty in tracing the Roman polity up to the termination of its sixth aspect, as it expired with its emperors, there is great obscurity attending the question, what, in the interval between the imperial and papal, was the form of Roman government at all? Perhaps this riddle in history is best interpreted by the riddle in prophecy, that what was called the seventh, was scarcely to be numbered in the calendar of national changes at all, and that what is termed the eighth, is properly to be reckoned of the seven. But one thing seems clear, that the first signal system of policy succeeding the overthrow of the imperial, must be that to which the finger of prophecy points as the last. It cannot be a puny, it must be a gigantic structure of policy, which claims dimension corresponding to the widely extended empire of ancient Rome. And it may be submitted, if under any other than the Papal dynasty, the language can be verified, 'It was, it is not, and

yet it is?' ver. 8. Rome had its sovereign princes, before whom tributary kings made obeisance. Rome possessed again its sovereign pontiffs, whose feet kings deemed it an honour to kiss. Rome had its host of gods and demigods, whom servile nations worshipped. Rome possessed again its calendar of saints and angels, to whom prostrate peoples were taught to offer adoration. Rome issued its manifestoes, which made subject thrones to tremble. Rome issued again its bulls and interdicts, which shook the authority of kings. Rome carried its trophies of military domination to the very verge of the civilised world. Rome carried again its trophies of spiritual domination over the face of an enthralled moral and intellectual world. And it was at this juncture, when Rome the second had risen out of the ashes of Rome the first, *diverse* though not *dis-similar*, that the language could be applied, 'It was, it is not, and yet it is.' It is to be remarked that the emblematic description of ten horns bearing each its crown, (that is, ten separate monarchies) serves, in so far, as a finger-post to the chronology of the prophecy. It is clear that the epoch indicated was posterior to the dissolution of the empire; for, during its existence, there was no such thing as the crown resting on ten heads. And if, as history seems to testify, the Western empire was parcelled out into ten separate principalities or kingdoms, we shall be pretty near our epoch when we find these ten kingdoms concurring to give their power to the beast, or, in other words, finding their principle of unity, their cement of general policy, in the papal influence, ver. 12, 13.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us prize our privileges, if we are favoured to enjoy the ordinances of the gospel in their scriptural simplicity and purity. Let us pray for the prosperity of Zion; and let us, as its members, earnestly seek to be adorned with those meek and holy graces of Christ's own Spirit, which own their native lustre in whatever is pure, and honest, and lovely, and of good report.

PRAYER.

O Lord, who art a Spirit, enable us this evening to approach thee in spirit and in truth. Enable us to treat the singleness of thy gracious purpose with the singleness of contrite and fervent hearts. We thank thee for the gospel, the pure, the benignant, the peace-inspiring gospel. We thank thee for the ordinances, the simple ordinances of Christianity, fraught with such gracious earnestness of heaven's mercies to the soul. We thank thee for the bible, and for the freedom of its perusal. We thank thee for sabbaths, and for their spiritual sanctity. O may we be taught to cultivate these privileges, in the spirit of the admonition, that to whom much is given, of them much shall be required. We pray that thou wilt endow us with the native, lovely, and lowly graces of Christ's own gospel. Suppress in us every lofty imagination, every

high thought, every aspiring temper, every vain-glorious motive, every ostentatious feeling, every self-exalting impulse, every self-righteous pretension. Beget in us, we entreat thee, a love for whatever partakes of the simplicity, the lowliness, the meekness, the gentleness that is in Christ. May we be taught the apostolic precept, To be clothed with humility. May our adorning be that of a meek and quiet spirit. May our ruling principle be unfeigned faith wrought by God in us. May our frame of heart be love, as Christ also loved us. May our trophies of Christian calling be the beauties of holiness. May our proficiency be in that wisdom which is from above, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And may our glorying, if we glory at all, be in the cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May our dependence be on thy Holy Spirit. We thank thee, O Lord, for thy goodness during the past day. We commend us to thy gracious care this evening. Amid the silent hours of darkness be thou our defence, spreading over us the guardianship of thy wakeful providence, and making a covenant with the night that no evil shall come near us. May our sleep be sweet, our safeguard being the Lord. Hear thou us in thy mercy, and answer us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM CXLVII.

SCRIPTURE—ZECHARIAH XI.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In this chapter the sacred writer enters formally upon a new page of the Jewish destinies. And the more simply to elucidate this portion of inspired writ let it be noted that there are two captivities of the Jews, and two restorations, distinctly indicated in the prophetic writings. The captivity in Babylon and the restoration from it are but the foreground whence an Old Testament seer's eye travelled to a second captivity and a second restoration, even more signal and memorable than the former. Of this second captivity, this second dispersion of Israel, we in existing times are eye witnesses; of this second restoration our posterity, if not ourselves, shall be witness. Zechariah looking in distant prospective to these coming events, launches into a strain of the most portentous and impassioned denunciation. In language fraught with the finest poetical allusions, he predicts the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem, ver. 1, 2. The dismay and ruin of the treacherous pastors, who, characterized by our Sa-

viour in New Testament times as blind leaders of the blind, caused Israel to stray, ver. 3. He introduces a fine allusion to our Saviour's ministry, as pursued among a people, because of their headstrong infatuation, a doomed people, 'a flock of slaughter,' ver. 4. He lends a striking typical representation of the characteristics of that ministry. He assigns, as its badge, two shepherd's staves, the one called Beauty, and the other Bands. The former the emblem of Jewish privileges, still asserted by our Lord when he said, 'I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' The latter the emblem of Jewish union, still upheld while the burden of Christ's ministry was in prosecution. But both the staff of Jewish privileges and the staff of Jewish concord was to be broken, when by an impious rejection of their Prince they entailed a transference of their religious advantages to the Gentiles, and a disruption of every national bond amid the final desolations and ruin of their state, ver. 7—17. In the course of this bodeful summary of events, there are two distinct notices which merit special remark. The first is the minute, and in some kind literal allusion to what formed the grand and blasting transgression of the Jews, their misprising the Lord of glory, 'valuing him at thirty pieces of silver,' ver. 12, 13. The second, the significant notice of the combined infatuation and imbecility which should characterize the Jewish pastorship, that is, their priesthood and teachers; an infatuation and an imbecility lamentably betrayed amid the latter annals of Judea, and of which no language can be more expressively descriptive than the words, 'the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened,' ver. 17.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The crowning sin of the Jews was that they slew the Prince of life. Let us beware lest we virtually perpetrate their sins. If we disown Christ's claims to our allegiance, we crucify the Son of God afresh. If we hold cheap his salvation, we crucify the Son of God afresh. If we deride or prostitute his ordinances, we crucify the Son of God afresh. If we assume a hollow and unhallowed profession of his gospel, we crucify the Son of God afresh. If we sell ourselves to deliberate sin, we crucify the Son of God afresh.

PRAYER.

O Lord, the all-seeing Jehovah, whose eyes behold, and whose eyelids try the children of men, look down upon us at this time to prove our hearts, and whilst thou provest in thy mercy, to amend them. We often know not what manner of spirit we are of, and if left to our own dimness of discernment will be betrayed into the most fatal mistakes as to our character and state. But thou, O God, do thou search us and know our hearts, try us and know our thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting. More especially do we entreat thee, heavenly Father, to preserve

us from a spurious profession of thy blessed gospel. O may it not be ours to incur the guilt of crucifying afresh the Lord of life. Slay thou rather within us whatever would oppose itself to his undivided empire over our hearts. Let not sin be the darling object of our affection while we profess Christ. Let not the world occupy the supreme place in our affections while we profess Christ. Let not self-righteousness exert a secret sway over our minds while we profess Christ. Let not unhallowed tempers, and inclinations, and appetites hold ascendancy in our bosoms while we profess Christ. O may Christ himself be enthroned, where alone he is entitled to reign, in our heart, and soul, and mind. Cast thou down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against his knowledge, and bring into captivity our every thought to the obedience of Christ. May we be enabled, in unfeigned sincerity, to testify he is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. And may our life, our daily life, be a practical comment on the language, We count every thing but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. O Lord, who bringest the light out of his chambers, we thank thee for the dawn of another day, and for the many blessings with which it finds us surrounded. Teach us to sacrifice unto thee the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and to declare thy works with rejoicing. Surely it belongs to us to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night. For thou, Lord, presentest us with the blessings of thy goodness; thou makest the outgoings of the morning, and of the evening to rejoice over us. We pray that thou wilt enable us to dedicate this day to thy glory. May no wilful offence against thee be indulged by us. May no service which we can render in thy name be indifferent to us. May what is well-pleasing in thy sight be what is most grateful to our minds. Give us this day our daily bread. Enable us to discharge every personal, domestic, and social duty aright. Dispose us for all thy will, whether that will be to crown us with blessing, or to visit us with trial. In either case may God be our rock, for there is no unrighteousness in him. Hear us in heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and accept, and do, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM II. 8.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION XVIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

In this chapter are three cardinal topics pursued. The first of these the sudden and irretrievable ruin of the mystic Babylon, the apostate church, the grand enslaver of the souls of men. The whole of the emblems employed concur to the effect that the overthrow of this empress of spiritual abominations shall not be more rapid than it is irremediable; and, more than this, that the overthrow shall be at a moment when she is congratulating herself on her triumphs; when she is saying, 'I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow,' ver. 7. Like as the fire of heaven came down on Sodom and Gomorrah, like as the retribution of God descended on ancient Babylon, when Belshazzar sat amid his revels and his wine, shall the torrent of the divine vengeance descend on the mystic Babylon, as in a moment. 'The plagues shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burnt with fire,' ver. 8. The second topic, embraced in this chapter, is the fearfulness of the reverse with which she shall be visited. We are led to conclude, from an intimation in the previous chapter, that the very powers which had previously subserved her ascendancy, shall in great proportion at last array themselves against her, 'shall hate her, and make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire,' chap. xvii. 16. Probably the force of public opinion, both on the part of rulers and people, shall be so irresistibly directed against her, in consequence of fresh disclosures of her treachery, and perjury, and priestcraft, and corruptions, that an almost universal cry of indignation shall pervade the limits of Christendom. And it does not seem the least emphatic corroboration of this view what is supplied in the tone of her remaining adherents, her mercenary abettors, as the prophecy intimates they shall be, when they are described as appalled by the magnitude of her calamities, 'standing afar off for the fear of her torments;' and when uttering the language of unavailing lamentation, they cry, 'Alas, alas! that great city, for in one hour is she made desolate,' ver. 10—19. Whether God shall lend an almost miraculous aggravation to her plagues, futurity must disclose. The third topic involved in this chapter, is the appeal to the people of God to beware of sympathy with the deeds of this meretricious church; an admonition which is not overstrained, if it be supposed to intimate that on the eve of the latter popish ascendancy, (for that there shall be such a latter ascendancy is implied, even if no other evidence were furnished in scripture, in the jubilant language of that apostate church itself, 'I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow;') there shall be a general tendency to extend a false charity to her errors and iniquities. Let professed Christians, in these times, decide for themselves, whether an indulgent view of the perversions of popery, whether an acquiescence in her antisciptural plans of educa-

tion, whether a deference to the voice of her organs, whether in the senate, or in the popular assembly, be not a virtual partnership of her corruptions. And let us not neglect to count the cost. The plagues of that apostate church are, in God's adjudication, not trivial. What if popery should itself be the scourge of those who abet it? ver. 4.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us be assured that every departure from the simple letter of God's word is spiritual apostacy. The question is not whether the pagan, or the Mahometan, or the Papist, be in furthest remove from the spirit of undefiled religion. The question is, What is our inscription? Is it Christ's, or is it anti-christ's? Am I, or am I not, partaker with the enemies of God?

PRAYER.

O Lord, the great and dreadful God, whose eye of purity cannot behold iniquity, and the fire of whose holy indignation shall utterly devour thine enemies, we come, this evening, to abase ourselves at the footstool of thine infinite Majesty. Let not the fervour of thy righteous jealousy burn against us, while we seek to produce our cause, to bring with us reasons, to take with us words, why God should avert his anger; while even we venture to prefer the language, take away all iniquity. We have, indeed, heinously sinned, and wherewith shall we answer thee. And if thou wert to lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, we must entail the extreme measure of thy wrath; must be consigned to the blackness of darkness for ever. But thou, O God, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. We plead that there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; that there is peace in the blood of the cross; that there is a propitiation of thine own gracious approval for sin; that there is a way opened into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus. And our prayer is, that thou wilt see God our shield; that thou wilt behold us in the face of thine Anointed; that thou wilt admit us to the exercise of thy free grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; that thou wilt let thine eye be upon the Man of thy right hand, upon the Son of man, whom thou madest strong for thyself; that thou wilt regard all our transgressions as blotted out in that precious blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin; that thou wilt accept us in the Beloved. O God we come to entreat that thou wilt grant us true repentance, and thy Holy Spirit. We have occasion to be jealous of ourselves lest any amount of the abominable thing which thou hatest should still adhere to us. But we would seek our resource in thy great and precious promises and assurances. Is not Christ

exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to grant repentance as well as remission of sins? Is the Lord's arm shortened that it cannot save? Is thy Spirit straitened that he cannot deliver? Is not thy promise, If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them who ask him? O vouchsafe unto us, then, those effective influences of thy grace which shall lay prostrate the whole of our moral man to God. Pour in upon our souls that godly sorrow for sin which worketh repentance unto salvation. May the mountains of our remaining corruptions melt down at thy presence. May the hard and stony fabric of our hearts be softened into sympathy with thine overflowing mercies. May the sensibilities of a tender and broken spirit abide with us as a perpetual source of holy experience, and diffuse themselves in every direction in our lives in perpetual issue of holy actions. O thou who keepest Israel, we consign us, this night, to thy care. May we lay us down and sleep, the Lord protecting us. May we awake to the light and duties of a new day, the Lord sustaining us. May thy goodness, and thy mercy, follow us from day to day, and may we dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. We present our thanksgivings and prayers in his name, whom thou acceptest always. And now glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LI. 17.

SCRIPTURE—ZECHARIAH XII. XIII.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

CHAP. XII. There can be no doubt that this chapter refers primarily to the Jewish church and people; although, from the circumstance of the greater part of the events to which it relates, being still future, the precise import of several of its predictions may not be understood till the event shall declare it. On ver. 10—14, events already past have shed important light. The passage is a promise of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit—a promise to the Old Testament church, kindred to that which the New Testament church has from her departing Lord, John xvi. 7—11. It received a remarkable accomplishment in the conversion of three thousand souls on the memorable day of Pentecost, immediately after the ascension of our blessed Lord into heaven, Acts ii. 37—41. It has been fulfilled in all the memorable seasons of revival which the church has enjoyed in succeeding ages. It is ful-

filled in every conversion of a soul to Christ. And it will be fulfilled, in a remarkable manner, in the experience of the Jewish people in the latter days.

CHAP. xiii. This, like the preceding chapter, looks forward to the gospel day. It announces: 1. The opening of a fountain for sin and for uncleanness, ver. 1. This promise was fulfilled when our great High Priest shed on the cross that blood which cleanseth from all sin; and when, as xii. 10, the Spirit of grace was given in his fullness, to regenerate and sanctify polluted souls. 2. The turning of men from idols, and from all idolatrous and false worship, ver. 2—6. This part of the prophecy was fulfilled in the deeply rooted aversion to idols, with which their long captivity in Babylon was sanctified to inspire the minds of the Jewish people, Isa. xxvii. 9. It was accomplished, too, in the signal overthrow of Pagan idolatry throughout the whole Roman empire, in the primitive ages of Christianity. And it is most blissfully realized in a spiritual sense, when, through converting grace, souls are brought to renounce the world and all their spiritual idols, and cleave to God as their everlasting portion. 3. The vicarious sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 7. Against him, when standing in the room of his whole church, the sword of divine justice awoke in Gethsemane and Calvary, the good Shepherd was smitten, and the sheep were scattered, Matt. xxvi. 31; but the smiting of the Shepherd was the safety of the sheep—it was, that Jehovah, the great smiter, might turn his hand in mercy on the poor and perishing little ones—might bring them into the fold of grace; and, at last, into the fold of glory. 4. The rejection and ruin of the unbelieving Jews but, at the same time, the extension of mercy to a chosen and believing remnant, ver. 8, 9.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

God will employ his church's enemies for her chastisement; but he will in the issue punish them for their hostility to his people, xii. 1—9. The great promise to the New Testament church is the promise of the Holy Spirit, of whose operations faith, repentance, and all other saving graces are the blessed fruits, ver. 10—14. Let us earnestly seek the indwelling in our souls of this Holy One; that, being purified from all our guilt in the fountain of the Saviour's blood, xiii. 1, and cleansed from all our idols, through the grace of his Spirit, ver. 2—6, we may be devoted to the service of him who hath redeemed us to God by his own blood, ver. 7. And if it shall please our heavenly Father to cause us to pass through the fire of affliction, may that fire refine us, and bring us with more devoted heart to say, The Lord is our God, ver. 8, 9.

PRAYER.

O thou that hearest prayer, pour out upon us, according to thy promise, the Spirit of grace and of supplications. May he enable us to worship thee with reverence and holy fear. We would mourn before thee because of our great and manifold transgressions. We have offended

thee, O our God. We have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and are no more worthy to be called thy children. But we bless thee with all our heart, that as we have been great transgressors, we have a great Saviour, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and who is able to save to the very uttermost. We come to thee this day through him. The sword of justice has smitten him. The great and good Shepherd has given his life for the sheep. O, for his sake, turn thy hand of mercy upon us. Pardon our iniquities, for they are very great; and let us know the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. O Holy Spirit, condescend to take up thy gracious dwelling in each of our hearts. Alas, they are polluted, the seat of many idols. But thou art the Spirit of grace. Take away their pollutions, expel their idols, give us the new heart, that we may walk in the ways, and keep the statutes of the Lord, and do them. And now, when we are to go forth into the world, and be conversant with its duties, its temptations, and its trials, we consecrate ourselves, O our God, unto thee. May thy light and thy truth guide us; may thy strength support us; may we endure, as seeing thee who art invisible, and count it our meat and our drink to do the will of our heavenly Father. Our own interests we leave with thee. Our afflicted friends and brethren we commend to thy compassion. Zion, the city of our solemnities, we make mention of before thee. May her purity and her peace be promoted; may her boundaries be enlarged; may her hallowed privileges soon be extended to the people of every language and every clime. Gather to thyself thy long outcast people of Israel, and bring in the fullness of the Gentiles. Enable us, O gracious God, highly to prize, and suitably to improve all the invaluable blessings and privileges which we ourselves enjoy. May we bring forth fruit under them all to thy praise and glory. And now, O Hearer of prayer, may our unworthy persons, and our imperfect worship, be accepted in thy sight, for the sake of him who is our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM XLV. 3.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION XIX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

Of the gathering of the people of Israel to the Saviour in the latter days, we have abundant assurance. The vision in this chapter, ver. 1—9, seems particularly to allude to this joyful event. It is an anthem of praise on the fall of the New Testament Babylon. But its leading note, or chorus rather, is in the language of the Jews, and is not to be found in any of the eucharistic odes that are interspersed through the preceding part of the Apocalypse. The supposition is, therefore, a natural one, that the introduction of the Hebrew doxology in this place is intended to intimate that the time of the restoration of God's ancient people will then be come, and that converted to Christ, they will join with the Gentile church in extolling the faithfulness and equity of his administration. On any other hypothesis than this, the harmony of the vision will be destroyed; but regarded in this view, its several parts appear harmonious and sublime. First, converted Israel, now brought within the 'heaven' of the visible church, but still remaining a distinct community, celebrates the holiness and faithfulness of God, as manifested in his judicial procedure toward the antichristian state, ver. 1—3. Then in admiration of the divine judgments, and in joy because of the sudden and happy restoration of God's ancient people, the Gentile church, symbolized by 'the four living creatures,' and 'the four and twenty elders,' is represented as uttering her delighted response to Israel's praise, ver. 4. After which, in mutual gladness for the recovery of the one, and the enlargement of the other, they are represented as both joining in one rapturous and triumphant song, ver. 6, 7. This view of the vision harmonizes with all the other prophecies regarding the same subject. It appears to be the scope of them all, that the general conversion of the Jewish people will take place immediately after the destruction of the antichristian power, and that that destruction will be an important mean, in the hand of the Spirit of God, for opening their eyes, overthrowing their prejudices, and bringing them to the faith and obedience of Christ. Such a correspondence will they perceive between the predictions respecting antichrist and their fulfilment, that they will be brought to a thorough conviction of the truth of Christianity; to 'look on him whom they pierced,' and to 'mourn for him;' to acknowledge him as their Saviour and Lord; and to join with his church in celebrating the majesty and rectitude of his whole administration. The remaining part of the chapter contains a sublime metaphorical description of our glorious Redeemer, going forth in his gospel, and in the great dispensations of his providence, to consummate and follow up the triumph over his antichristian adversary.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Times of blessed enlargement and joy are in store for the church. Her seasons of trial and

suffering may be dark and long; but they shall be sanctified for good, and they shall all have a happy and glorious issue. Her Head reigns King of kings, and Lord of lords; and in his mediatorial reign, and in all the high attributes that adorn his mediatorial character, she has ample security for the final overthrow of all her impenitent foes, and the accomplishment of all the promises on which she has been caused to hope. Blessed are they who belong to him, who are arrayed in his righteousness, and who follow him whithersoever he goeth.

PRAYER.

O God, we adore thee, and desire to rejoice in thee as the God of Zion, the church's God. Thou hast said of Zion, This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it. Thou hast been with her throughout all generations, and hast never forsaken her. Thou hast moved toward her, in thy providence, many times in a dark and mysterious way, clouds and darkness have been round about thee. But thou hast been Zion's God still. By her afflictions thou hast tried the faith and patience of her members, thou hast purified her in the furnace. And we believe and rejoice that thou wilt be with her even to the end. O blessed God, may we be numbered among the true members of thy spiritual Zion. Let us not be satisfied with a mere form of godliness, a name to live, while we are dead. Let us be brought, in thy great mercy, into a pardoned, accepted, and holy state. From all our innumerable transgressions may we be purified through faith in the fountain of the Saviour's blood. May it be granted to us to be arrayed in the fine linen which is the righteousness of saints, even in thy righteousness, O blessed Jesus. We would count all things but loss, that we may win thee, and be found in thee. The crown of our salvation we would place on thy head, O thou King of kings, and Lord of lords, for thou art worthy. Subdue us unto thyself. Make us thy willing people in the day of thy power. And enable us, by thy Holy Spirit, to follow thee fully in all the paths of holy obedience, in the observance of thy sacred institutions, and in all the leadings and disposals of thy sovereign and wise providence. Let us be faithful unto death, and at last receive a crown of life. We put thee in remembrance, O thou Faithful and True, of these blessed promises respecting thine ancient people, and thy Gentile church, on which we have been permitted to meditate at this time. And we plead their fulfilment. Gather into one the outcasts of Israel; and let the united church of Jews and Gentiles soon lift up her joyful voice, and say, Alleluia, for the Lord God omni-

potent reigneth. And now, Father of mercies, when brought to the close of another day, we raise our souls in gratitude to thee, because of all the kindness that has brought us hitherto. May the everlasting arms be underneath us, and all who are near and dear to us, during the slumbers of the night. And if we shall be spared, in thy goodness, to behold the light of another day, when we awake, may we be still with thee. Hear us, O Lord our God, for thy beloved Son's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXII. 8.

SCRIPTURE—ZECHARIAH XIV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

This concluding chapter of Zechariah's prophecy comprehends the whole time from the destruction of Jerusalem till the days of the millennial glory of the church. It announces,

I. Jerusalem's overthrow, ver. 1, 2. Her people had been long honoured and exalted as the peculiar people of God. But they had gone away from him by a great and perpetual backsliding. They continued impenitent amidst all the overtures of his mercy, and all the dispensations of his judicial displeasure. At length they filled up the cup of their transgression by rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory. Therefore wrath was announced, and ere long wrath came on them to the uttermost. Yet, in the midst of wrath, Judah's offended God remembered mercy. 'Half of the city,' it is foretold, 'shall go forth into captivity;' but 'the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.' Divine mercy visited many of the Jewish people before they were finally overthrown, Acts ii. 41; iv. 4. They were saved in the time of indignation—were hid in the day of God's anger.

II. God's procedure towards the Gentile nations. It shall be, in the first place, judicial and wrathful, ver. 3. From the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, God went forth, in the great dispensations of his providence, and fought against the last of the four monarchies. The Roman empire never, thenceforth, prospered as it had done in former ages, and ere long it was broken to pieces, Dan. ii. 40—44. But this judicial procedure, the prophet announces, shall be with a view to signal mercy. Spiritual conflicts, spiritual triumphs, great spiritual mercies to the Gentile nations shall ensue, ver. 4—21. These predictions began to receive their fulfilment when, through the death of Jesus, the middle-wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles was broken down—a new and living way into the holiest made manifest—and the church, with all its blessed privileges, made accessible to the long-separated people of the heathen world, ver. 4, 5. This was—this is the gospel age—a season of most blessed light, in

comparison with the dark economy of prophecies and types, ver. 6. But greater light and greater privilege still await the church in the close of this age. The Sun of righteousness shall illumine and gladden all lands, the river of the water of life shall flow throughout the whole desolate heritages of the earth, and Jesus, King of his united and glorious church, shall be acknowledged and adored in all nations and kindreds of the world, ver. 7—9. In that period Judah and Jerusalem shall be inhabited, and shall abide in safety, ver. 10, 11. Judgments from the Lord shall plead the cause of his church and people against all by whom they are opposed, ver. 12—15. The ordinances of gospel worship shall be sacredly observed; or if there shall be those by whom they are neglected and despised, they shall be visited with sore spiritual, and it may be also, with temporal judgments, ver. 16—19. In fine, in those future, happy times, the Spirit of holiness shall be more abundantly poured forth than in former generations. Under his enlightening and sanctifying influence, multitudes in all lands shall be consecrated to God; they shall love and keep his holy institutions: the glory of the Lord shall be their animating principle even in the ordinary transactions of life, and the church shall be blissfully purified from the evils that polluted and debased her in former days, ver. 20, 21.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let us beware of unbelief. It brought fearful ruin on God's long-favoured people; and we ought to give earnest heed lest we perish after the same example. Enjoying the precious privileges of the gospel church, let us diligently and wisely improve them. From time to time let us wait on God's holy institutions, and be deeply concerned while we do so, that the spiritual rain may descend, and fertilize, and gladden our souls, and render us, in heart and life, Holiness to the Lord.

PRAYER.

We adore thee, O Lord, as the God of providence. Thou rulest over all. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of saints. Thou wilt fulfil thy threatenings against thine adversaries, as surely as thy promises to them that fear and love thee. We would, for our part, take refuge under the shadow of thy wings. We bless thee for him, our glorious Emmanuel, who is a hiding-place from the storm, and a covert from the tempest. We would, in the humble confidence of faith, enter into that hiding-place. There we are safe from guilt and from wrath, both here and hereafter. There we are accepted in the Beloved. And there we can and there we desire to hold blessed converse with thee as our Father and our God. We adore and bless thee, O Lord, as the God of salvation. Our souls magnify thee for its wondrous scheme, for its glorious Executor, for his finished

work, for his exaltation to give repentance and the remission of sins, for the free offer of mercy through his blood, and because we, the dwellers in the isles afar off in the sea, have heard the joyful sound. But, O our God, we would fear lest a promise having been given us of entering into thy rest, we should come short of it through unbelief. Save us, we beseech thee, from this great sin. O may it be given to us, in the behalf of Christ, to believe on his name. And all-guilty and hell-deserving as we are, receiving him and resting upon him, may we have peace with thee, and access into the grace wherein thy people stand, and be enabled to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We rejoice, blessed Jesus, in the promise that thou shalt be King over all the earth. O let thy kingdom come. Erect it in these poor, rebellious, polluted hearts of ours. Subdue them to thyself. Renew them by thy Holy Spirit to delight in obedience to thine ordinances and thy laws. And, through him that loved us, may we be made more than conquerors over all the enemies of our salvation. We bless thee for all thy holy institutions. Make them indeed the means of grace to our souls. As we go forward in the observance of them, may we grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May we make it our persevering study, and be enabled by the Spirit of holiness to die to all sin, and to live unto righteousness. We unite this morning in thanksgivings to our Preserver. We have slept and awaked, because thou hast made us to dwell in safety. And now, O our covenant God, we lift our eyes to thee for thy mercy to conduct us in thy fear through the duties, temptations, and trials of this day. Enable us to set the Lord before us, and he will direct our steps. Remember, in thy great mercy, our afflicted and sorrowing friends and brethren every where. May their troubles be alleviated, and their consolations, through Jesus Christ, greatly abound. Do good in thy good pleasure to Zion, build up the walls of thy Jerusalem. Let no weapon formed against Zion prosper, and every tongue that riseth in judgment against her do thou condemn. O have respect unto thy covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. Let thy way be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let men be blessed in Christ, and all nations call him blessed. Our humble prayer, O our God, is before thee; hear us, for thy name's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM L. 3.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION XX.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

The sublime vision contained in this chapter relates to the millennium, or the thousand years' reign of the saints with Christ, the general resurrection, the final judgment, and the eternal state.

The chapter announces: I. A period of signal restraint to the great tempter and adversary of souls. He shall be bound up from deceiving the nations for a thousand years, ver. 1, 2. It is the Angel of the covenant who binds Satan. He triumphed over him in his cross: he has obtained many a triumph over him in succeeding ages; and he will obtain one more signal and glorious triumph over him, ere the church's militant state shall be closed. When this blessed period shall commence, we cannot with certainty determine. But it cannot be far distant—it must be near at hand. It will be a season of peace and prosperity to the church, such as she has never known before; a period of success to the gospel, and of the abounding of pure and undefiled religion, more glorious than the annals of the church have ever recorded.

II. The resurrection and reign of the martyrs during this happy period, ver. 4—6. It is a spiritual resurrection; not of bodies, but of souls; not of individual persons, but of a great and glorious cause. The spirit of those holy men who laid down their lives for the testimony of Jesus shall revive, and the cause for which they contended, and suffered, and died, shall be held in renown. It will be a blessed period. Holy men shall abound in the earth. Holy exercises shall be delighted in. Earth shall, in those long and happy ages, be no faint emblem of heaven.

III. The removal of Satan's restraint, his last great effort against the church, and his final overthrow, ver. 7—10. Uninterrupted peace will not be the privilege of the church in this world. Even the long and happy period of the millennium shall be followed by a season of signal apostacy and great tribulation. Satan, the deceiver of souls, shall be released from his imprisonment of a thousand years, and permitted to go forth, as in former ages, to deceive the nations and draw them into hostility to Christ and his church. And his delusions shall be permitted to be extensively successful. Who the nations are over whom he shall prevail, here termed Gog and Magog, whether they shall consist of such merely nominal Christians as, in the latter days of the millennium, may have been in their hearts disaffected to the purity of the gospel and the power of godliness; or of those who, through enmity or fear, may have fled from the scene of flourishing Christianity to the remotest countries of the earth, it is not of much moment to inquire. Over multitudes he shall prevail; and, in number as the sand of the sea, these deceived nations shall assail the Christians throughout the world, and especially those of them who shall be then living in the land

of Canaan and the city of Jerusalem, with warfare and persecution. But this season of deception and ungodliness shall be short, ver. 3. God will permit it for holy and wise reasons; but he will cover with everlasting confusion this last dreadful effort of his adversary against his cause. Accordingly, ver. 9, they shall be suddenly and totally destroyed. It may be that they shall be literally devoured by fire from heaven, as the wicked cities of the plain were in ancient days; but, at all events, their overthrow shall be accomplished in such a way as to convince the whole world that it is from God—that therein he is vindicating his government against his rebellious foes, and pleading the quarrel of his persecuted church.

IV. The general and final judgment, and its solemn consequences, ver. 11—15. This will, in all probability, take place soon after the overthrow of Gog and Magog. Jesus will be the judge, Acts xvii. 31. Infinite majesty and spotless purity are his own attributes, and will characterize his whole procedure in the judgment-day, ver. 11. All will be judged, the young and the old, the rich and the poor. All the generations of mankind shall be assembled around the great white throne, ver. 12. The books shall be opened—the book of God's omniscience, in which are registered all thoughts, words, and actions—the book of every man's own conscience—the book of the law of nature—the book of revelation—and the book of life in which are written the names of those who belong to Christ. All shall be judged according to their works. They who shall be testified to be the people of Christ shall be adjudged to life everlasting. The ungodly and unbelieving shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. This is the second, the most awful death, which will never be succeeded by any blessed resurrection.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

The friends of Zion should be cheered, amidst all her present afflictions, by anticipating the times of refreshing that await her in the latter days. And for these blessed times they should long and pray. Meanwhile, it is to be borne in mind, that neither the collective church nor individual believers can, so long as they are in the present state, enjoy untroubled peace. This is not their rest; it is polluted. Their rest is on high, and they must enter it through much tribulation. But, blessed be God, the tribulations of his church and people shall all have a happy and glorious issue. They shall, in due time, come out of them all, and be made more than conquerors through him that loved them. Let us often realize the solemn and awful period when we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Let us now make the judge our friend by believing in his adorable and worthy name. Let us make it our great concern to be found in him; so shall we obtain mercy of the Lord in that day.

PRAYER.

Ever blessed and adorable God, we, thine unworthy and sinful creatures, would this even-

ing approach the footstool of thy throne. We would humble ourselves before thy holy majesty, and confess that we are not worthy to take thy name into our lips. O let not the Lord be angry when we take upon us to speak unto the Lord. Behold us in thy beloved Son, Christ Jesus, in whom thou art well pleased. And for his sake, because he is worthy, may we find grace in thy sight. We praise thee, O most gracious God, for all thy manifold providential gifts, and for all the saving mercies which any of us have been privileged to enjoy. O if the Spirit of grace has revealed to us the excellency and glory of Jesus, the Saviour; if he has enabled us to receive him into our hearts by faith, and shed abroad his love in our hearts, and brought us to dedicate ourselves to be his people and servants for ever, may we be filled with holy, humble gratitude, and spend our redeemed lives to thy praise and glory. If there be amongst us any who are without Christ, dead in trespasses and sins, unpardoned, unholy, O, we beseech thee, Lord, have mercy. Take such from the fearful pit and the miry clay. Lead them to the blood of sprinkling. May they lay hold of the hope set before them, and experience, through the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that blessed change of heart, that spiritual resurrection, without which no man shall see the Lord. Then shall we be a happy family indeed; having thee as our covenant God, enjoying the good-will of him who dwelt in the bush, and conducted onward by thy free Spirit to the land of everlasting uprightness. O our gracious God, we plead thy fatherly pardon for all the transgressions of heart and life wherewith this day we have transgressed against thee. Alas! that we should so often offend thee; so often grieve thy Holy Spirit; so often wound him who redeemed us by his own blood. Subdue our iniquities. Cast our sins into the depths of the sea. Heal our mournful diseases; there is balm in Gilead, and a physician there. When, in thy good providence, we are permitted to retire to the repose of another night, O Shepherd of Israel, be thou our protector. May we dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty. We pray on behalf of all our brethren of mankind. Have mercy on those who know thee not, who, in the midst of external light, are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. And may the light of everlasting life soon be made to shine into all lands, that men may know thee, from the least even to the greatest. O thou Comforter of them who are cast down, may thy consolations be ministered

to all the sons and daughters of affliction and sorrow. And may we, and all who are near and dear to us be taught of thy Holy Spirit to live as those who are strangers in the earth. May our portion be on high, and may our hearts be there; and in the day when Jesus shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe, may we form part of that happy company who shall be found in him, and shall enter in with him into the everlasting kingdom of their Father and their God. Now, unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we are able to ask or think, be glory in the church, by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXI. 10.

SCRIPTURE—MALACHI I. II.

REMARKS.

The prophets were witnesses for God in the world. In particular, they bare witness, each in his own day, of a Saviour to come. 'Now we have only one witness more to call, and we have done with our evidence.' With Malachi the spirit of prophecy ceased in the Jewish church. A long period of darkness intervened between him and the 'voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.'

We have no means of ascertaining exactly the time at which Malachi lived; but it is probable he was cotemporary with Nehemiah. The state of the people, as seen in the prophet's complaint, is exactly similar to that in which Nehemiah found them when he assumed the government. After they returned from captivity, the Jews continued a stiff-necked and a backsliding people still. Their adversity had not made them wise. Haggai and Zechariah were sent to reprove them for delaying to rebuild the temple. Malachi is sent to reprove them for neglecting and profaning its services after it had been built.

At the commencement of the first chapter we find the Lord, by the mouth of his prophet, condescending to maintain a controversy with Israel, defending his own system of government against their unjust complaints. By many successive messengers Jehovah had declared that the seed of Jacob were his chosen people, the special objects of his love. But the men of that generation boldly questioned the truth of that announcement. God had chastised them for their sins, but instead of being humbled under his hand, they turn round upon him who made them, point to their sufferings, and say, 'Wherein hast thou loved us?' That which was originally an act of free grace on the part of God, they now demand as a right, and will not acknowledge that Israel had been favoured by the Lord.

How easily does the prophet stop the mouth of the gainsayer, 'Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' These Jews thought that in virtue of their descent from Abraham, they had a right to all the privileges they enjoyed: but Esau was of Abraham's seed as well as Jacob, yet 'I loved Jacob and hated Esau,' chose the seed of Jacob as the objects of my free favour, and left the seed of Esau, like other nations, to the just consequences of their sin.

From the 6th verse to the end of the first chapter there is a complaint directed generally against the whole body of the people, but more immediately against the priests; a complaint that they did not serve God with sincerity of heart, and did not reverently observe the ordinances of his house. The people were worldly and irreligious; the priests instead of reproofing and instructing them, connived at their impiety, and shared in their guilt. The whole matter is summed up in the 13th and 14th verses. Those who ministered at the altar, despised it in their hearts. They dragged themselves through the prescribed form of duty, but they did not revere the ordinances as appointed of God. They grew wearied of the continual recurrence of sacrifices in which they could see no spiritual meaning. Having lost the spirit, they soon departed also from the letter of the law. Contrary to the express precept of the law, the people brought, and the priests allowed, the torn, and the lame, and the sick to be offered as sacrifices in the temple. They served themselves with the best, and set apart the refuse for the service of God. For this a curse is denounced against them. That curse is written for warning to us on whom the ends of the world have come. It is the same spirit that still animates the children of disobedience. Under the gospel dispensation, since the Lamb of God has been slain once to take away the sins of the world, we are not required from time to time to take a lamb without blemish from our flock, and lay it a sacrifice on the altar: yet the same God demands of his people still the same service in another form. The tenor of his requirement still is, 'my son, give me thine heart.' There are many ways in which we may, in which we do, closely imitate that very sin of the Jews which brought a curse from heaven upon their heads; for example, in youth the intellect is clear, the affections are warm, and all the faculties of body and mind are in vigorous exercise: if ye spend that season of youth in seeking your own pleasure, with the intention of becoming religious after you grow old, ye have in your flock a male, and are vowing and sacrificing to the Lord a corrupt thing. Again, a man spends a day in toil or in business, the evening in recreation or amusement, and late at night, when all his faculties are worn out, when his eyes are becoming heavy with sleep, spends a few moments saying a prayer; that man hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing. He has kept the best to himself, and has brought as an offering to the Lord that which could be applied to no other purpose. And should he accept this at your hand? No, he has recorded a curse against those who offer it. Those who know the Saviour, do not serve God

thus. They feel that they are not their own. They are bought with a price, and they account it but a reasonable service to consecrate themselves to the service of him who redeemed them; they seek to glorify him with their bodies and spirits which are his.

PRAYER.

O thou holy Lord God Almighty, we would approach unto thy presence and learn to speak thy praise. We bow before the Lord our Maker. In conscious unworthiness we would bow down our souls while we reverently adore our Creator, our Preserver, our Judge. We have fallen by our iniquity. We have sunk into a fearful pit. We have destroyed ourselves. Out of the depths, O Lord, we cry unto thee. Hear us, God of our salvation. Look on him who bare iniquity in his own body on the tree, and for his sake have mercy on us. Now, seeking to hold communion with God, we would place our confidence in the appointed Mediator. We seek to approach the Holy One. Unclean, we draw nigh to him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. We come through the veil now rent, into the holy place; we turn our eyes toward the mercy-seat, that we may see there the glory of the Lord. O Lord, show us thy glory, thy glory as it is seen in the face of Jesus. Admit us now into thy presence, in Christ accepted worshippers before thy throne. Admitted, through him who loved us, to hold converse with thee our God, we would frame our lips to speak thy praise. We will remember thy works, thy works of wonder done unto the sons of men, and we will learn to praise the Lord for his goodness. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us be stirred up to bless his name. Thy thoughts, O Lord, have not been as our thoughts, nor thy ways as our ways. Thou hast not dealt with us as we have sinned. We were lost. By nature we were all under the curse, the curse of God. Under that curse we could not lie, it would weigh us down into hell. Yet we are spared, and are here praying in hope. There is no help in man, but thou, Lord, hast laid our help on One that is mighty. God said, Save from going down to the pit. God gave his own Son to save the lost; thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. And now, Lord, unable to save ourselves, we wait for thy salvation. We pray for grace according to our need. Lord, increase our faith. Enable us to place our confidence where thou hast laid our help; enable us to build our hopes on the foundation thou hast laid. Lord Jesus, thou art mighty to save, stretch out thine hand to help us. Lord, save us or we perish. Cleanse

us in thy blood. Clothe us in thy righteousness. Deny not thy grace. Withhold not thy enlightening and convincing Spirit. Redeemer exalted, redeem our souls from sin, and death, and hell. And now, O God of providence and grace, we cast ourselves on thee. Sustain us in the duties, and trials, and temptations of this day. Make thy grace sufficient for us. Send thy light forth to lead and guide us. Open thy hand wide and satisfy us with good, the good that we need for the life that now is, and the better blessings of the life to come. Forgive our sin; accept our thanksgiving; and send an answer to our prayer, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXXVII. 1.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATION XXI.

REMARKS.

The greater part of this book is occupied by a prophetic history of the church militant; and now, in the conclusion of it, we obtain a view of her celestial glory. After making known so much of what should happen to the saints in their journey through life, the inspired writer, or rather the inspiring Spirit, proceeds to delineate, so far as that can be done in the language of men, the glorious things which God hath prepared for his own in the world to come. The scheme of divine revelation was drawing to a close, and it pleased its Author to wind up the whole with the fullest exhibition of heaven's joys which can be presented to a believer's mind before he has put off this earthly tabernacle. Here we find a beam from the sanctuary above penetrating the gloom in which this world is involved, attracting our thoughts, and aiding our view to an incorruptible, an undefiled, an unfading inheritance. Believers are all the children of a king: but while they sojourn in this land of the stranger, their appearance is very unlike their station. They are lean from day to day. Their hands hang down, their knees are feeble, their hearts are heavy. Such a discipline is needed. He who loved them with an everlasting love, allows troubles to come upon them, but he does not delight in troubling them. The bitter draught is necessary: but to show that it is administered by a Father's hand, it is mingled with much of sweetness. His own designs of love will not admit of their being freed from tribulation, but he can enable them to rejoice in the midst of it. Various are the springs of comfort which send forth their streams to refresh the traveller in this weary land. Various the means which the eternal Father has employed to revive the drooping spirits of his own adopted children, while they are imprisoned in the flesh. One of these means is to direct the hope of the weary to a rest that remaineth; to tell the

poor of a treasure at God's right hand; the wanderer of a home in heaven. Believer, what a privilege is here! But like all others, it is peculiar to them that believe. When sorrow comes on in such a flood as would overwhelm the unaided energies of nature, ye have the means of rising high above it; many means ye have, and among others this. Look to the mansions that Christ hath prepared for you in the Father's house. Think of the joy unspeakable and full of glory that shall succeed the light affliction which endureth but for a moment, the portion that cannot be taken away. But not only has the hope of heaven been held out to the believer, much has been told him of what it is that constitutes heaven. Left to form a conception of it for himself, he would assuredly err in every feature. Although revelation is nothing more than a glass through which spiritual things are seen but darkly; still it is a glass which, when applied to our weak sight and turned upward, is sufficient not only to find out that there is a city of the living God, but to distinguish many of its peculiar glories. The city shines afar, not an undistinguishable blaze of light: for through this glass ye can perceive the Rock of its foundation. Salvation it hath for walls and bulwarks. Even from this far-off world ye can see within the glittering, gladdening streams of the river of life, the streets of pure gold. Ye can see there a crowd unnumbered of pure spirits rejoicing, adoring. In the midst a great white throne, and in the midst of the throne a Lamb as it had been slain; the city filled with light, and the Lamb the light thereof.

Just glance at some of the leading features in this description of future bliss. Ver. 2. The new Jerusalem prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. See Isa. lii. 1. The church collective fully sanctified; every component member clean. All lovely and without spot in the eye of him who redeemed them. Ver. 3. One item of the blessedness of heaven is, God himself shall be with them. Are we ready for enjoying such a heaven? If left to write out a description of heaven to suit ourselves, would we put this clause in it? Whether is our experience that of Asaph, Psal. lxxvii. 3, or that of David, Psal. xliii. 4? Is the thought of God's presence 'trouble,' or 'exceeding joy?' Ver. 5 All things new, all things; not only a new home, but new inhabitants. Every one who is admitted there has put off the old man with his deeds. Not only a new heaven and a new earth, but a new heart, in all who are admitted therein from this sinful world. Ver. 8, 27. The wicked shall not stand in God's sight. All in heaven are under his eye, in the light of his countenance, and he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Ver. 23. The Lamb the light thereof. He who was the Lamb slain to take away the sins of the world, is now the Lamb as it had been slain, in the midst of the throne—the glory of God, in which all the hosts of heaven rejoice.

PRAYER.

O thou that dwellest in the heavens, we lift our eyes to thee. At thy gracious command would we arise from the dust of earth, and send upward the affections of our souls to thy throne.

We would awake at thy bidding from the sleep of worldliness, and seek even now to hold communion with the Father of our spirits. We have been cleaving to the dust. The God of this world hath blinded our minds, so that we have not seen thy glory. We have not known ourselves, nor thee. This day we have been living as if we were of the world. We have been seeking here our reward. We have sinned in this thing. We have broken our Lord's command. We have forgotten the one thing, and been cumbered by the many. O our Father, this is not our portion, it fadeth away. This is not our rest, it is polluted. Blessed be thy name that there is a better portion. Blessed be God for the hope he has given us of a rest that remaineth. Thanks be to God for all the high hopes he has held out to us in his word; thanks for the precious revelations contained in the word now read. In the light of thy word, O Lord, we would look up to the mansions which our Saviour has prepared for his own. We would learn to wean our affections from earth, and set them on those glorious things that are at thy right hand. But into thy presence nothing entereth that defileth, and we are unclean,—altogether vile; we are born in sin. Our iniquities have gone over our heads. Be merciful to us, O God. Create a clean heart. O thou who sittest on the throne, make all things in us new. By the mighty working of thy Spirit, make our souls meet for thy presence. We confess ourselves impure; we would learn to lament our impurity. We would mourn and be in bitterness because of felt uncleanness. We would look to the Lamb of God. We would trust in his atonement. We would be clothed in his righteousness. Cast us not away, O God, from thy presence. Look on us now in love. The souls thou seest here still unbelieving, and in thy sight abominable, bring to the fountain opened, and purge away their sin. Look on those whom thou seest already in Jesus, and perfect that which concerneth them. Sanctify us wholly. Give us the hope, the hope well-founded, of a portion in the inheritance of thy saints. Bring us to Christ. Being brought to him, may we abide in him, and his word abide in us. Believing, may we be enabled also to rejoice in the Lord, and to show ourselves his by a conversation becoming his gospel. Our prayer, Lord, is before thee; thou knowest our wants; supply them out of thy fullness; see us in the face of Jesus; accept us in the Beloved, and to thy name we ascribe eternal praise. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

PRAISE—PSALM LXXX.

SCRIPTURE—MALACHI III. IV.

REMARKS.

At the commencement of the third chapter there is a very distinct announcement of Messiah's advent, ver. 1. A messenger to prepare the way; that is, John the Baptist, see Matt. xi. 10. Ushered in by this appointed forerunner, the Lord himself, the prophecy continues, shall suddenly come to his temple. After a repeated assurance of the certainty of his coming, there is in the second verse a much needed caution to those who lightly expected a temporal Deliverer, and thought not of one glorious in holiness, to purge away iniquity from Jacob. The saints of old were wont to address their prayer to the 'terrible God who keepeth covenant and mercy.' God is no where more terrible than in the keeping of his covenant of grace. He keeps it in so far as it demands the punishment of guilt, even though that fell on the head of his own Beloved. He keeps it in so far as to cast out the unbelieving and impenitent,—to cast them out for ever, ver. 3. This Saviour shall sit as a refiner of silver. Oft his own chosen are put in a sore furnace of affliction, but it should be their consolation to know that the refiner is looking on; that he willeth not their suffering; that he afflicts them for good; that like the refiner of silver he will keep them in till all the dross is away, in order to have them pure in his sight, but will not keep them in a moment longer. And as the refiner of silver, sitting over his crucible, knows the exact moment when the purifying process is complete, by observing when his own image begins to be reflected from the surface of the silver; so this Refiner lets his own chosen lie in the furnace till they begin to reflect his image, that image which had been defaced by sin. Mark the wonderful declaration of the sixth verse. Many illustrations of it might be given. It is the immutability of God that secures a period of respite to a sinful race. Had that attribute been wanting, another would have poured vengeance on the whole human race the moment they had sinned. When the divine law is broken, divine justice demands the punishment of the transgressor, but a previous counsel of God secured for the condemned a period of trial; that counsel is carried out; that covenant is kept, for he who made it changeth not. The whole course of Israel's history is one continued illustration of this. At any point in the progress of the nation, had Jehovah their King looked to their deserving only, they would have been instantly consumed; but at every point in their progress he remembered his covenant, and they were spared. Had God dealt with them as they deserved, the Red sea would not have opened to afford them a passage, for the unbelieving Hebrews would have perished all in the land of bondage. The inhabitants of Canaan would not have fainted because of them, for their carcasses would have fallen in the wilderness. In the time of Malachi they had become sinners before the Lord exceedingly; but still his own eternal purpose required their preservation, and he changeth not. And even now it is in this verse that we can

get the only solution of the problem, how the Jews continue to this day a distinct people. Why have the sons of Jacob been preserved to this day from extinction, or from being merged among the nations? History cannot tell, for it records only the operation of causes calculated to destroy them. Philosophy cannot tell. The infidel cannot get an answer to it from any of his dumb idols; when he has wearied himself in vain let him turn to the Bible, and read the answer here, 'I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' The same thing is illustrated in our own experience. This verse contains a key to the greatest mystery which the universe exhibits. A soul that has sinned, and yet not suffered the threatened doom; a guilty rebel left to roam free in the very heart of the kingdom; a defiling spot allowed to lie on the surface of an otherwise fair creation, not swept off into the bottomless pit; this is the wonder, and it is all explained in the verse before us; Jehovah changeth not though we do. Ver. 16—18. This is a passage to which believers delight to turn, as the source of much consolation. The Lord knoweth them that are his. Those who delight themselves in the Lord, and therefore speak of his grace, enjoy more than communion with each other. In each little company of two or three met to hold converse on the things that concern their peace, God himself is present to hearken and hear, present to bless them. Looking on them from his holy habitation, he marks them his own; he keeps them his own amid the temptations of the world; he will acknowledge them his own, number them among his jewels in the great and terrible day.

CHAP. IV. Before the prophecy is sealed, ere yet the lips of the last witness are closed, another exhibition is made to the Jewish church of their Redeemer's glory. Thanks unto God that he never left himself without a witness throughout the successive dispensations preparatory to the coming of his own kingdom. Thanks be to God, that in all ages, from the first and more obscure designation, 'the seed of the woman,' down to Malachi's 'Sun of righteousness,' the same Jesus was revealed to the faith of his people. And thanks be to God for his greater goodness to us. That which angels strained to look into; that mystery by their own lips proclaimed into which the prophets made diligent search; that mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, our eyes have clearly seen. The fathers believed in a Saviour coming; how shall we escape if we reject the Saviour come? Unto us much is given; of us much shall be required. Let us arise and shine, for our light has come, and the glory of the Lord has arisen upon us.

PRAYER.

Our Father in heaven, we worship thee; preserved by thy power during the darkness of the night, we have assembled this morning to give thee the praise. In the enjoyment of life and all life's blessings, we desire to acknowledge with gratitude that all is the gift of thy hand. From thee, Father of lights, every good gift

cometh down. We will trace thy goodness in the remembrance of the past, and we will depend on thee for the time to come. Sanctify our memories, that they may record thy wondrous works. Sanctify our whole nature, that we may live to thy glory. We praise thee, Lord, for thy word given, a light in the darkness. We praise thee for him whom the word reveals, Christ the Lord. Open our eyes to behold the wonders contained in thy word. May we see there the face of Jesus. Reveal thy Son to us, reveal thy Son in us. May the Spirit enlighten the eyes of our understanding to behold, in the glass of the word, the beauty of thine own Beloved; may our affection be so sanctified that he shall be in our eyes the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. O that this Jesus whom thou hast set up King in Sion, may be acknowledged King in our heart's affections. Thou, O Lord, hast exhibited thy love in Christ crucified. Let that love constrain us; let thy love in the gospel overpower the opposition of our carnal minds, and melt our hard hearts. Lord, we have gone astray, let thy loving-kindness draw us; draw us unto thyself. Holy Spirit cease not thy striving until the enmity be subdued. Holy One, depart not from these hearts until thou hast made all things new; until thou hast driven out the buyers and sellers that defile the temple, and set Jesus, our Lord, in the midst of the throne. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Let thy way be known on the earth. Let the people praise thee, Lord, let all the people praise thee. O let the light which has arisen on us penetrate the thick darkness that covers many lands. Make the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. Give to thy Son the earth for his possession. Have mercy, Lord, on Israel, scattered and peeled. How long, O Lord, wilt thou cast off thy people whom thou hast redeemed? Will thy wrath burn for ever more? Arise, O Lord, and have mercy on Zion. At last, O Lord, take away the blindness which hath happened unto Israel. Show them thy glory. Teach them to seek and to find thy glory in the face of Jesus. Let them see and flow together unto Zion; to him who is King in the palaces thereof. Save thy people, O God; bless thine inheritance. In the same Saviour let the Gentiles trust. Of Jew and Gentile make one adopted, redeemed family; make thy people willing in the day of thy power; let thy sons come from far, numerous as the dew of the morning. Let the people praise thee, O Lord, let all the people praise thee. And now, our

Father, give us this day our daily bread; protect us from danger; guard us from temptation; help our infirmities. As we are preserved by thy power, enable us to live to thy glory. Forgive the sin of our holy things. Let our persons and services be accepted, and our prayer heard and answered, for the sake of Christ our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

PRAISE—PARAPHRASE LXVI.

SCRIPTURE—REVELATIONS XXII.

REMARKS.

In this chapter the same subject is continued. The veil which hides from mortal eyes the world of spirits is here in part drawn aside, that the heirs may get a glimpse of their inheritance. In this description of the New Jerusalem, there is one feature which is more frequently introduced, and stands more prominently out than any other. It is the place occupied by Christ, here called the Lamb of God. The Lamb is the 'temple,' the 'light' of heaven. In the Lamb's book the names of the saved are recorded. The throne, the great white throne, around which angels and redeemed spirits stand adoring, is 'the throne of God, and of the Lamb.' This chapter should fortify the believer against the fatal heresy which denies the divinity of Christ. No array of verbal criticism can avail to dim the mark of Deity that here encircles the Saviour's head. It is not by throwing out one word and explaining away another, that you can reduce the personage here spoken of to the level of our nature. The parts of this description so cohere that none of them can be wanted; you must blot out the whole of this record ere you can hide from the inquirer's eye the proof that the man Christ Jesus is the mighty God. You must extinguish the light of heaven ere you can bring the eternal Son down to the level of created things. O the Socinian's heaven must be very darkness, for a mortal man is the light thereof. From this passage we may learn farther, that there will be no popery in heaven; therefore there should be none on earth. Worthy the Lamb, is the ever new song of the redeemed. A papist would vary the chorus by worthy the virgin; worthy a hundred other lesser idols; no such discordant note will ever mar the symphonies of the upper sanctuary. There are many saints in heaven, more than in the pope's calendar, but no one does homage to his fellow; no idolatry there; they worship God. In heaven, as on earth, there is but one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.

The principal thing to be derived from the whole passage, is the position which Christ occupies in his church in heaven; and that settles the position he should occupy in his church on earth. The kingdom of God, now and hereafter, is one. Those who are adopted children, are made meet

for the inheritance. They are so prepared that on entering heaven they will feel themselves at home. When redeemed souls get within the portals of the holy city, no time will be spent in the exercises of an awkward novice; they will strike in at once in sweet accord with the highest notes of spirits who have been ages there. Would it be so with you were the silver cord now broken that binds you to the body? If even now you were taken from earth and admitted into heaven, could you glide at once, and without conscious effort, into all the habits and employments of the place? would you find nothing new there? especially would you find nothing new in the position occupied by the Lamb of God? In heaven he is all. Take away the light, and there cannot be day; so take away Christ, and you have blotted heaven from the universe. If ever we obtain the inheritance, we must even now be made meet for it; and we are not being made meet for it unless we be allowing Christ that place in our affections which he occupies in the realms of glory. In the realms of glory his place is the midst of the throne! In the multitude of our thoughts within us, are we willing to place him there?

And now we have read the word. The whole counsel of God has passed in review before us. It ends as it began, in grace. The distinguishing characteristic of the salvation of God is, that it is all of grace; and no where is that characteristic more distinctly declared than in these the parting words of the inspiring Spirit, 'whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.' When Malachi had finished his "report" the curtain was drawn, and for many generations no direct message reached the church from her King on high. Then the Lord of glory suddenly came to his temple, he came to save. John, too, has finished his message. Long the curtain has been drawn; no direct revelation from heaven. Again the Lord shall come suddenly; shall come again! but there is no more sacrifice for sin—come again to be glorified in them that believe, and to take vengeance on them that know not God. His own emphatic declaration is, 'I come quickly.' They who wait for his salvation account not this a threat; they read it a promise, and joyfully respond, 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

PRAYER.

God Almighty, our Creator and Preserver, we again unite our hearts and tongues to give thee praise. We have been preserved another day; all our wants have been supplied. We would learn to receive all the common blessings of life as the good gift of a Father's hand. Hitherto hath the Lord helped us, and now we will stir up our souls to praise the Lord. Thou, God of our life, and length of our days, accept the tribute of our thanks. We have been cumberers of the ground, yet up to this moment we are not cut off. We recognise here the power of the Intercessor's prayer. Blessed Jesus, we owe our all to thee. Subdue our rebellious hearts that we may be wholly thine. King

of Zion, reign over us. We desire now to open our mouths unto the Lord; we avouch the Lord to be our God. Lord, what wilt thou have us to do? Lord, teach us thy will, and enable us to do it. Our days and years are passing; passing into eternity, and alas, they bear engraven on them a testimony against us; we have not spent them aright; we have not been waiting for and hastening to the coming of our Lord. God and Father of our Lord Jesus, give us the spirit of adoption, make us thy children. Let it not be with any of us a name to live; renew and sanctify our souls. Make them meet for the inheritance. We give thee praise for the prospect of another sabbath of rest. We pray that thou wouldst preserve us this night, and spare us to the light of that blessed day. Then raise our affections to thyself. O that we may know what it is to long for God, the living God, and desire to come and appear before him. Bring us to thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacle; bring us in faith to thine altar; give us a dependence on the one efficacious sacrifice thereon laid, to come unto God, and to find God gracious, and to account him our exceeding joy. We unite now, O Lord, to pray for all our brethren around; prepare a worshipping people for thy day of rest, and prepare a good word for a waiting people. Let those who minister in holy things be strong in the Lord, and speak boldly the whole of thy counsel. Knowing themselves the terror of the Lord, may they be faithful and urgent in persuading men. And O may many be persuaded. Holy Spirit, administering the covenant now on earth, persuade men to turn from the world to God. Thou who didst give the word, put forth thy power with the preaching of it in this land. Let it mightily prevail. Let thy work appear before us; revive us yet again. Add to the church souls saved. Let glory arise to God in the highest from many saints edified, and many sinners saved, through the preaching of the everlasting gospel. Again, O God of mercy, we commit the keeping of our souls to thee; we pray for pardon. Let not thy wrath lie on any soul worshipping here. Take away sin. O God be reconciled to us through the death of thy Son. One thing we seek for, peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our waiting eyes are toward thee, O Lord; our hope is in Jehovah. O give the blessedness of the man whose trust is in the Lord. Bless us, even us, O our Father, with all spiritual blessings in Christ; and to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYERS

FOR

PARTICULAR OCCASIONS.

MORNING.

SACRAMENTAL FAST-DAY.

Almighty God, by whose care and mercy we have been preserved throughout another night, and brought in peace and safety to the beginning of this day, inspire our hearts with deep-felt gratitude to thee. Show us the value of salvation, that, while we cordially praise thee for the common bounties of thy providence, we may specially celebrate the riches of thy saving grace. Convince us of our own unworthiness and sin, that we may unfeignedly acknowledge ourselves to be less than the least of all thy benefits. Alas, O God, how numerous and how great have our transgressions been! We were shapen in iniquity, and are by nature the corrupt descendants of a fallen father. But we especially confess our actual violations of thy law: That law is holy, just, and good; and as our Creator, Governor, and Benefactor, thou art entitled to our absolute and unswerving obedience. But in ten thousand times ten thousand instances we have disobeyed thee. Thou knowest whether some of us are not even yet entirely alienated from thy service, and practically opposed to thine authority. And if any of thy professing worshippers here present have become new creatures in Christ Jesus, we acknowledge that by thy grace they are in this respect what they are, and that still they are miserably short of what they ought to be, of what they by this time might have been. Alas! that those who have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, should be so cold and lifeless in his service, and should do so little to promote his cause. And, alas! that any to whom thy law and gospel have been brought, should perversely violate the precepts and sanctions of the one, and resist the invita-

tions and promises of the other. O God, regenerate unrenewed souls, sanctify thy believing people, and pardon all of us. We are called this day to confess our sins and implore forgiveness in the house of prayer. Grant that we may do so with true hearts. Render the approaching services eminently useful in showing us our own sinfulness, and in stirring us up to avail ourselves of that glorious provision which thou hast made, by Jesus Christ, for the pardon and salvation of the sinner. May thy ministers be enabled clearly and affectionately to exhibit alike the heinousness and danger of sin, and the value and all-sufficiency of the Saviour; and may many impenitent and unpardoned sinners be led to flee from the one and to embrace the other. Bless the sacred exercises of this day to all who are about to sit down at the sacramental table. Do thou thyself prepare them, and grant that at the approaching solemnity this day's believing penitents may be thankful and happy guests. Hear us, God of mercy, in these our prayers, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

EVENING.

SACRAMENTAL FAST-DAY.

O God, the day is thine, the night also is thine; and it becometh us morning by morning, and evening by evening, to celebrate thy praises and to ask thy blessing. We give thee thanks for all the benefits, whether personal or social, which we have this day received at thy hand, more especially for the continuance of those great religious privileges which, alas! we have often neglected and abused. Blessed be thy name for the special opportunities we have this

day had of holding conference with thee, and of receiving instruction and consolation from thy word. O God, in the greatness of thy mercy we may trace the greatness of our own unworthiness and sin; and while we thank thee for the means of grace which this day has brought along with it, we implore thee to forgive our remissness in using them for the high and holy purposes which they are fitted to promote. With pardon give us penitence. Sanctify us also in the whole man, body, soul, and spirit. For the future may we avoid whatever thou hatest, and do whatever thou commandest. Cordially believing the doctrines of thy gospel, may we faithfully obey the precepts of thy law. May we adorn the doctrine of Jesus Christ by walking in all his commandments and ordinances blameless. Promote, we pray thee, the sanctification of our souls by the discipline of thy providence, the instructions of thy word, and the ordinances of thy worship. Follow with thy blessing our attendance this day in the house of prayer. Accept of the confessions, the praises, and the prayers which we professed to offer before thy throne; and grant that we may be led by what we have this day heard and done to cleave to Christ, to avoid sin, to practise holiness, and to love thy law. Bless our fellow-worshippers. May the sacred exercises in which they have been engaged prove to many of them a useful preparation for the solemn and delightful service of communion. Throughout the whole extent of our father-land cause knowledge, good order, and true religion to prevail. Guide and prosper thy servants in the holy ministry. May they rejoice to spend and to be spent for the best of Masters, and in the best of causes; and may they be encouraged to serve thee by seeing that their ministrations are eminently useful to immortal souls. May thy servants in the magistracy prove honoured instruments of promoting social order and personal religion in the midst of us. O regenerate the earth. Make the world to believe on Jesus, and to worship thee. And now, Father of mercies, we commit ourselves to thy guidance and protection. May we retire to rest, penitent for our sins, and thankful for thy great and continued kindness towards us. And if we are spared to engage in the business of another day, O may we spend it like true-hearted disciples of Christ, and children of God. Hear and answer us in peace and mercy, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

MORNING.

COMMUNION SABBATH.

Most gracious God, thou God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our reconciled God and Father in him, help us on this the morning of a communion sabbath to present ourselves before thee with hearts in the right frame, and in the lovely exercise of every Christian grace. We come in the name of Jesus to adore thee, that in thy special goodness toward us we have been spared to see the light of another sabbath, and that a sabbath set apart to show forth the love of Jesus in giving himself an atonement for our manifold transgressions. What thanks, what praise do we not owe thee, that in the midst of such deep unworthiness we have thus been dealt with; that when, in strict justice, we should this day in the place of woe have been drinking the cup of wrath, we are invited to thy table, there to drink the cup of salvation. O Lord, thou hast indeed dealt bountifully with us; () that our hearts were filled with an overpowering sense of thy love, and, while we would feel it in its depth and power, we would humble ourselves deeply before thee. We would acknowledge that a sense of thy love in Christ can alone break our hard hearts, and humble their proud spirit of self-sufficiency. Let the private prayers we have this morning offered in our closets, and those we now present before thee, be answered according to thine own gracious promises, and let the abundant love of Christ be shed abroad upon us through the grace of the Spirit, and thus let our hearts be drawn out in lowly confession of our great sinfulness and multiplied sins. In view of the solemn service before us, we would confess and deplore the original corruption of our nature. Thy holy law demands a holy heart, and we are guilty, we are defiled before thee, because we have brought into the world with us an evil heart, a heart alienated from thee, filled with the love of sin. We would confess and deplore the multitude of sins which have sprung from our cherishing this evil disposition. We have obeyed its impulses, and rebelled against thee, and have trampled ten thousand times on thy commandments, drowning the voice of conscience, resisting the strivings of thy Spirit, and putting away the solemn admonitions of thy holy word. Our sins are multiplied beyond number, and aggravated immeasurably beyond our imagination. We would lament that we have so multiplied our transgressions; and as we are to confess this day at thy table that thou wert righteous in demanding from our Surety full

satisfaction for all our violations of thy law, we would confess that it is righteous, and just, and good, that we are righteously condemned by it, and that we can see no reason why its dread sentence of condemnation should not now be executed, save that Jesus died, the just for the unjust, to bear our guilt, to satisfy thy justice, and reconcile thy law to us, and us to thy law. Nor would we less, in view of the solemn service of this day, confess and deplore our neglect of Jesus, our indifference to the precious offers of pardon and forgiveness in his blood. We would seek and implore grace to assist us in bewailing the littleness of spiritual desire which we have permitted the love of Jesus to awaken within us, and the cold indifference of heart with which we have so often met the boundless affection and compassionate tears of a crucified Redeemer. Gracious God, we know not what to say; our guilt in trampling on thy law is an evil of infinite offence, and deserving of dread vengeance. O what then must our guilt be in having so long rejected Christ, and shut our hearts against the offers of thy grace. We confess this guilt, we deplore it before thee, and implore forgiveness. We see no reason why we should not be shut out from an interest in Jesus; we can use no plea against thy sovereign justice making us a curse both now and when our Lord cometh, save the all-prevailing plea that sovereign grace hath put in our power, that Jesus died the just for the unjust, to bring us sinners to God. Blessed be thy name, that we are assured this is a plea which thou wilt never refuse to own as prevailing and precious before thee. And while we regard the coming services of the day as a gracious means of edifying our souls in the faith, that thou art well pleased with us for Jesus' sake, and in him pacified towards us for all that we have done, we would confess and deplore our manifold provocations of thy gracious Spirit. O thou most gracious Spirit, we have met thy advances of love with rebellious opposition, and spurned thee by indifference and sin, and driven thee away by backsliding; and what can we say? We have no excuse; we feel that we love sin, and justly mightest thou leave us under its power, justly forsake us this day, and leave us to feel all the misery of a communion sabbath that brings not with it thy refreshing and enlivening presence. But we beseech thee to acknowledge us in this our confession. We can use no plea save that which thou stirrest us up to employ, that Jesus died for us; pardon us for his sake, and be graciously present with us this day. O depart

not from us, but accompany all the means of grace this day with thy blessing, that we may be refreshed. O most gracious God, we adore thee for this day. We praise thee for the blood of Jesus which cleanseth from all sin. We glorify thee for his finished work of atonement and righteousness, and for his ceaseless work of all-prevailing intercession. What love to put in our power so prevailing a plea! We would feel that we need none other. We would discharge every other plea whatsoever, save that which springs from the blood of Jesus and his spotless righteousness. We would feel that in having this, we have all that we need, and on the ground of this all-sufficient plea would we plead that this day, thy word, thy ordinances, and thy providence may work together for our spiritual advancement, our everlasting welfare, and thy glory. Gracious Father, we implore thy holy keeping and guidance while in the house of prayer. If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up. But do thou carry us up, sustained by thy presence, and purified by thy Spirit, according to the purification of the sanctuary. Carry us up, relying by a living faith on the blood of Jesus, humbled to the dust under the united sense of thy love and our unworthiness; prepared to testify heartily before thee, before angels, before thy people, and before the world, that we have embraced Jesus, that we are resting steadfastly on him, and that we find him indeed precious to our souls. For this purpose strengthen, we pray thee, all our graces. Pour out upon us the grace of repentance. Let our hearts be broken and made contrite by beholding thy love in sparing not thine own Son; work in us all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power; elevate our love, draw it out into lively exercise, and do thou, the God of hope, fill us with hope and eager expectation, that we shall assuredly find thy table and its exercises sweet to our souls. We would unite our hearts to pray for thy servant, our pastor, whom thou hast set to preside this day over the service, and for all whom thou mayest send to help him in the work. O Lord, enlarge the heart of thy ministering servant; give him to feel the unutterable preciousness of Christ, and to be concerned for the salvation of precious souls. Bring him up fully fraught with the spirit of the gospel, and rejoicing that he is commissioned to offer Jesus freely to us all. Let him be strengthened to set a full Christ before empty sinners, and helped to plead with them from the heart that they will accept of his salvation. In prayer be his mouth. Bring

his petitions, his confessions, his thanksgivings from a full heart; and give us, thy servants, grace indeed from the heart to join in the public prayer. We pray for like mercy to those who are brought this day to assist thy servant, our pastor, in the work of dispensing the word and bread of life. May the Holy Spirit be shed abroad abundantly on them, and by them speak to us, and give us hearts to receive their message. Bless thy servants in the eldership; give them much of thy countenance, may thy Spirit hold them up, and may they find it sweet to deal forth the bread of life to thy people. Remember in mercy our fellow-worshippers. Strengthen such as are rejoicing to maintain their confidence in Christ, and may they indeed find Jesus all their salvation. Be gracious to any that are suffering from the oppression of spiritual darkness. Gracious God, dissipate the clouds of their sorrow, and reveal Christ to them, and convince them that thou art ready and waiting to be gracious to them for his sake. Be gracious to thy aged people, and to the young of the flock. May we all this day, severally and together, enjoy Christ. Be in the midst of all the worshipping congregations of thy people. Preside in them by the presence of thy Spirit. May many souls this day be brought to embrace Jesus; may many this day be edified by him. May thy name be hallowed, thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. O go forth with the preached gospel, and give the missionaries of the cross a mouth and wisdom to preach Christ crucified, so as to extend the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom, and multiply the number of his redeemed. O God, we again implore the grace of thy Spirit to keep our heart and mind this day in thy fear, and to enable us in all our exercises and services to glorify thee; and the glory shall be to thee the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, through Jesus Christ, now and for ever. Amen.

EVENING.

COMMUNION SABBATH.

O Lord, we would again approach unto thy throne of grace, in the name of Jesus, to glorify thee for all the loving-kindness which thou hast vouchsafed to us this day. We have been in thy house, and there have we seen thy goings in thy sanctuary. We have been at thy table, and there have tasted the gladness wherewith thou makest glad the hearts of thy chosen. O

most gracious God, we would acknowledge the greatness of the honour conferred upon us; that we, so unworthy, so guilty, so polluted, should be permitted to engage in a service so holy and exalted as that of showing forth the death of Jesus Christ. Glory be to thy holy name that thou hast spared us this day in peace, and crowned us with manifold blessings. Surely thou mightest have testified against us, and caused thine hot anger to burn against us because of our manifold sins. But thou hast been gracious for Jesus' sake. We are spared because he was not spared. We have enjoyed mercy and blessing because he has pleaded for us on the ground of his own righteousness. O most holy and most merciful Father, draw forth our hearts in thanksgivings, and while we feel thy love awakening our gratitude, help us to feel it binding on our hearts the obligations of duty. Help us from this day and forward to obey as thy children, not from a slavish fear of thy wrath as manifested against all disobedience and unrighteousness of men, but from the confiding love of reconciled children, who tremble indeed at thy judgments, but love thy commandments. Help us to count thy commandments not grievous, but righteous and holy. May we feel the yoke of Christ easy, his burden light, and feel that his love constraineth us to live no longer as they do who are dead in sin, but as those who are alive from the dead. Blessed Lord, permit us not to forget that we have this day at thy table renewed our obligations to be thine. May the memory of these be deeply engraven on our heart; may the weight of them be on the conscience, and while we feel constrained by the love of Jesus to yield to them, do thou supply ever-renewed strength to aid us in our obedience. Having tasted this day how sweet are the joys that Christ vouchsafes to the soul which seeketh him, and how pure are the pleasures that are administered by the Spirit of all grace, may we henceforth regard the loftiest joys of the world as insipid, and turn from its pleasures as below the notice of God's children. Again, we have set to our seal that thou art true, that Christ is precious, that we are bound to holiness. Graciously forbid that we should backslide. Confirm us in the possession of Christ's constraining love, that love which moveth in our hearts, the love which filleth the law. We lament that we have so often vowed, and been found unfaithful. Our past backslidings testify against us, and wert thou to deal with us as we deserve, thou wouldst shut us out from Christ, and deny us the grace of thy Spirit. But do thou heal our

lacksidings. Put away all iniquity from us, receive us graciously, and love us freely, and put us in thy good and holy way, and keep us in it. O gracious God, we trust we have this day felt the preciousness of the broken and the contrite heart. It is thy gift and thy workmanship, and we pray thee to bestow it on us yet more and more. Humbly would we entreat thee to take away from us the hard and stony heart that is in our flesh, and give us an heart of flesh. O fulfil thy gracious promise to us. We would earnestly beseech thee to do as thou hast said, and put thy Spirit within us, and teach us to walk in thy statutes and do them. O that we may henceforth carry along with us the influence of this communion sabbath. May we long retain the memory of its sweetness, and seek by increasing holiness to fit ourselves the more for the eternal sabbath of communion with thee in glory. Gracious Lord, we would implore thee to accept of our thanksgivings for all the grace we have this day enjoyed. All our enjoyment, our rest in thy faithful promises, our satisfaction in thy ordinances, our views of Jesus and his cross, our exercise of faith, all, all, have come from thee, and to thee do we owe the acknowledgment. Let us not spend our gratitude in mere expression of words. Let it abide with us, and constrain us to live so as to manifest our thankfulness. We regret that our highest privileges here below so soon terminate, that our sweetest enjoyment is clogged by much carnality of feeling, and speedily closed by weariness of the flesh. Stir up our desires more actively, and lead us by deeper experience of the short-lived seasons of spiritual enjoyment here, to long the more ardently for that kingdom of glory where communion comes not to a close, where the weariness of the flesh is not felt. We bless thee for the aid vouchsafed to thy servants in the ministry who this day dispensed the ordinance of the Lord's Supper amongst us. In their services and in ours thou hast seen many sins, and much that thy pure eye cannot regard without being offended. Deal mercifully with us in respect of these sins. Remember them no more. Do thou, the good Lord, pardon us, and wash us from our filth and guilt in atoning blood and by sanctifying grace. May thy servants who have this day dealt forth to us the bread of life be themselves nourished. We thank thee in their behalf that they were strengthened for the work, and we thank thee in our own behalf that our eyes this day beheld our teachers. We bless thee for all the grace manifested to our fellow-worshippers. Thou hast

been gracious to them. If any have been enlightened, thou hast opened their eyes to see Jesus, and turned their hearts to him. If any have rejoiced, thou hast awakened their joy. If any have found peace in resting on the blood of Jesus, thou of thy mercy hast made them to acknowledge and embrace its sufficiency. Be pleased, Lord, to accept our thanksgivings in their behalf. Visit in thy mercy such as have come to thy table mourning, and have departed with a heavy heart. Convince them that the cause of their wretchedness is in themselves; that they are looking to their own sinful emptiness, and putting away Jesus from them. Bring them to him, and make them willing to embrace him as all-sufficient for them. And pardon, of thy mercy, such as have profaned the ordinance of the Supper. O lead us all to self-examination, that we may know how we have attended on it. Lay us not to rest, till we come to the blood of Jesus. Wash us from all the guilt of this day in that fountain, and clothe us in the robe of his righteousness, that we may lie down with confidence of thy forgiving grace. Follow with thy blessing the preaching of the gospel. O speed on the happy time when the pleasure and enjoyment of a communion sabbath shall be open not to one congregation here and there, but when all the earth shall enjoy the sabbath, even as all shall see the salvation of our God. Let Christ triumph this day among Jews and Gentiles. May the truth of his gospel have free course and be glorified. Hasten the triumph of the latter-day glory. And for this purpose pour out more largely of the spirit of revival at home, and grant a missionary spirit to us all, that we may give thee no rest till both among Jews and Gentiles the name of Jesus be known and published to the ends of the earth. Keep us graciously in thy fear, blot out our manifold sins, and answer these, our supplications, in peace, for Jesus sake. Amen.

TO BE USED BY A FAMILY WHEN
VISITED WITH SICKNESS.

O Lord our God, we desire to unite in blessing thee for the freedom of approach which we enjoy at all times to the throne of grace, through the atoning sacrifice of our merciful Redeemer; and we bless thee not only for the throne of grace, but also for the many encouragements we have through thy goodness to draw near in making known our requests. We give thee

thanks, O God, that whilst thou dost permit us to call on thy name at all times, and in all circumstances, thou givest us special invitation to draw nigh in the season of distress, in saying, Call upon me in the day of trouble. And this, O most merciful God, is with us of this household a day of trouble, seeing thou art visiting us by the disease thou hast brought on one of our number. O God, we would say thy hand is upon us, thy hand is upon us, for we know that affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground, and that it is the Lord who maketh sore, and bindeth up; who woundeth, and whose hands again make whole. It is thy prerogative alone, O God, to say, See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me; I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal, neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. O Lord, seeing we are so powerfully reminded by the testimony of thine own oracles that making sore and binding up, that the sending of disease and the removing it again, pertain unto thee and to no other, may we ever be prepared by thy grace to submit with all readiness to every chastisement by which thou mayest see fit to visit us. We especially entreat, in the present instance, that thy will as expressed in the visitation under which we are suffering at this time, may be affectionately accepted by us all as the rule of our duty. Whatever may be the issue of this trouble to our dear friend, as it respects life or death, may it issue in bringing us all nearer to the cross of him who died to save the perishing, and in preparing us to meet him with joy when he appears in the glory of his Father at the judgment-day. O Lord, have mercy upon us all in the trying circumstances in which we are placed, and as our several needs require. We rejoice to place ourselves in thy hands, for thou art acquainted with all our wants, and it is by thee alone they can be supplied. According to thy riches in grace do thou supply all that is lacking in us out of the abundant and inexhaustible fullness that is treasured up in our ever-blessed Redeemer. Visit especially, in the greatness of thy compassion, this afflicted one, and if consistent with thy heavenly will restore him [her] to health and strength, and other days of usefulness in the world. Rebuke the distemper which confines him [her] to the bed of languishing. Say unto him [her], O our Saviour, as thou didst of old to many who were diseased, Arise, thy sins are forgiven thee, take up thy bed and walk. If such mercy is yet in store for him [her] may he [she] never for-

get thy kindness and love; may he [she] never forget to praise thee for thine abundant goodness. May the language of all his [her] acting manifestly be, What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? But, O God, if death be in the cup; if indeed this sickness be unto death prepare him [her] for going hence. Reveal thyself in mercy to his [her] soul, and give him [her] to enjoy the comfort of knowing that he [she] possesses an interest in thy love which is better than life. Quicken his [her] apprehensions with regard to all that pertains to salvation, so that every doubt and all distracting fear may be removed from his [her] mind, and thus in the pure light of Jehovah he [she] shall see light. O thou Shepherd of Israel, compass him [her] meanwhile as with a shield, and when he [she] walks through the valley of the shadow of death, be thou with him [her] to comfort him [her] by thy rod and thy staff, and to conduct him [her] safely to the mansions of everlasting bliss in the kingdom of heaven. Impart to him [her] every consolation of which he [she] stands in need, and say in mercy to his [her] soul, Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine: when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee: for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour. Heavenly Father, do thou listen to the voice of our supplications in behalf of our afflicted friend, and listen when we supplicate thee in our own behalf. We cannot tell how soon we may be laid prostrate on the bed of disease and of death. We know that our foundation is in the dust, and that we are crushed before the moth. O that this important truth were habitually remembered by us, and that we were also habitually to remember how it is that we have become so frail; how it is that we are so much exposed to disease, and so certainly exposed to the stroke of death. Lord, thou hast taught us in thy holy word to look for this root of bitterness in sin, for by sin death hath entered into the world. We all do fade as a leaf, because our iniquities like the wind have taken us away. Enable us therefore to look constantly to him who can take away sin itself; who can cleanse us from all our pollutions, and clothe us in those robes which have been made white in the blood of the eternal covenant. O may we put on Christ as we are entreated to do, and then we shall not be hurt of the second

Death. Under the shadow of his wings we shall find protection from every enemy, and at last we shall enter in safety that happy place where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. Lord, help us by the guiding influences of thy Holy Spirit to take comfort, amid all our troubles and afflictions, from these happy prospects. And to thee the Father, to thee the Son, to thee the Holy Ghost, be everlasting praise, world without end. Amen.

AFTER RECOVERY FROM SICKNESS.

O Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth; thou hast set thy glory above the heavens. When we contemplate the works of thy hands, and consider the magnificence of all that thou hast created, well may we say, What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him? Yet thou condescendest to notice our guilty and fallen race, and nothing can occur to them without thy permission and appointment. The hairs of our heads are all numbered, and not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without our heavenly Father. Health, the greatest of temporal blessings, is thy gift; and sickness proceeds from thee, who art a gracious and merciful Father. Thou hast appointed to the children of men their lot here below, and thou hast said to them, Thus far shall ye go and no farther. None can go from thy Spirit, or flee from thy presence; none can escape thine observation, or avoid the wounds of those arrows which thou aimest. Blessed God, we this day appear before thee to take a review of our past life, and to pour out the feelings of grateful hearts in thy presence. The blessing of health was long enjoyed by us, but how little did we value it, and how sinfully and uselessly was it employed. It only led to the pleasures of the world; it was thoughtlessly wasted in securing this world's good things, which perish in the using; and in those gratifications and amusements which as they fly away leave their sting behind them. This precious blessing has been made subject to vanity, and has become the instrument of sin, instead of being the means of holy living and of promoting thy glory. In consequence of the enjoyment of health, we were living in false security, unmindful of thee our God, and of the awful eternity that is before us: but thou hast been pleased to visit us with sickness, and to show us the value of the blessing which we had so grossly abused.

The sorrows of death compassed us, and the pains of hell got hold on us, we found trouble and sorrow. It was then we said, In the cutting off of our days we shall go to the gates of the grave: we are deprived of the residue of our years. We said we shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living; we shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. But in the day of our trouble and calamity we called upon thee the Lord, and thou heardest our cry, and hast sent to us deliverance. Thou hast rebuked our distemper, so that it has fled from us, and by thy gracious dealings with us we still walk before thee in the land of the living. Now would we offer the tribute of thanksgiving and praise for all thy mercy and goodness, which we have experienced in these last days. Thou art the Physician of soul and of body, and it is thou who hast directed the physician's skill to those means by which the power of the disease raging in our body was subdued, and thou hast given thy blessing to the medicines which were employed, so that the sickness under which we laboured was prevented from drinking up the springs of life. We would desire to praise the Lord, to give thanks to his name, to exalt him before the people, and to celebrate his loving-kindness in the congregation of his saints. The Lord bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. We will sing to the Lord, and talk of all his wondrous works. We are not worthy of the least of all thy mercies. Make us, O Lord, to see our former vileness in thy sight, and teach us how we may best devote our preserved lives to thy service. We would desire to live to thy praise, we would make known to others thy truth. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ would we give thanks to thee our heavenly Father; and every blessing that we need would we desire to receive through him who is the only channel of communication between heaven and earth. May we never forget thy loving-kindness, or any of the benefits which thou hast so graciously conferred; for thou hast healed our diseases, and redeemed our lives from destruction. The vows which we have made on a sick bed, help us faithfully to pay. On former occasions we have vowed, but have not paid; we have made good resolutions, and have failed to carry them into effect; we have made professions of amendment, but they have passed away unheeded as the morning cloud or the early dew. But now, in thy strength, we earnestly desire to pay our vows, and to keep our resolutions, and to practise what we have

professed. May we now be enabled to produce in our conduct and conversation the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and may we be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Save us from the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of our hearts, and may we never again be found in the paths of folly and of sin. We recommend to thy pity and compassion all who are in sickness and distress. Draw near to them in the hour of trouble, and visit them with thy salvation. May those who are appointed to live be speedily restored to wonted health and strength; and for this purpose bless all the means which may be used for accomplishing that end, and prepare the dying for their great and awful change. May the living lay to heart this solemn truth, that death awaits them, and no one can tell how soon this summons may be put into their hands. O that this thought may bring men to sober reflection, and may it lead them to seek their refuge in the gospel. May Christ be discovered as an all-sufficient Saviour. May the period soon come when Jew and Gentile shall know Christ, and be found in him, and O that true religion may more and more prevail. Bless the families of our land, and may family religion greatly abound. May the head of the house be also its priest. These, our thanksgivings and prayers, we now present; may the sins of our holy services be forgiven, and all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

APPROPRIATE TO THE DEATH OF A RELATIVE OR FRIEND.

O God, in this, the time of our bereavement and distress, we betake ourselves to thee. Receive us graciously, and hearken to our feeble but imploring cry. For wise and holy reasons thou hast taken from us the desire of our eyes with a stroke. Dispose us to say with meek and thankful submission to thy will, The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. We acknowledge that this dispensation is righteous and merciful on thy part; O may it be rightly understood, and practically applied on ours. May it show us the evil of sin, with which sickness, and suffering, and death, are all so intimately connected. May it show us the insufficiency of the creature, and the need we have of a better than an earthly portion. May it show us the value of the Saviour, and the infinite importance of having a personal and vital interest in him. O God, be thou thyself our reconciled Father. Protect us

by thy power, and guide us by thy counsel. Like as a father pitieth his children, so do thou pity us. Amidst all the losses and afflictions of our lives may we have good reason to believe that thou art treating us with paternal care, that thou art training us by paternal discipline; and in the issue of all, may each one of us have cause to say, It is good for me that I was afflicted. Meanwhile, O God, we feel, may we also bear, the rod. By this bereaving stroke may we be warned and admonished. Yet, Abba, Father, console us under it. O give us the comfort of thine exceeding great and precious promises. Many of thy servants hast thou cheered in circumstances similar to ours, and even on the gloomy grave thy gospel has shed celestial light. We thank thee for that blessed gospel. We thank thee for the Saviour it sets forth. We thank thee for the blessings it offers and reveals. Christ has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light; and them that sleep in Jesus wilt thou, O God, bring with thee. Meekly and thankfully, therefore, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, may we leave in thine everlasting arms our pious friends departed, rejoicing to believe that their souls are at rest in paradise, and that hereafter, in their case, that which is sown in weakness, shall be raised in power; that which is sown in corruption, shall be raised in glory; that which is sown a natural body, shall be raised a spiritual body: and so shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth to his saints the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. O may we all be prepared to die. May each of us have good cause to say, For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. And may the departure of relatives and friends powerfully and practically remind us that time is passing away, that eternity is rushing on, and that, when a few years are come, we shall all have left the world in which, amidst the ravages of death, our lives have heretofore been lengthened out. God of comfort, console our hearts; God of holiness, sanctify our souls; Father of mercies, hear our prayers: and all through the merits of thy Son Jesus Christ, who died for sinners and rose again, and to whom be ascribed blessing and honour for ever and ever. Amen.

ON THE FUNERAL-DAY OF A FRIEND OR
A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY.

O Almighty Parent of the universe, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we, thy frail, guilty, erring creatures would prostrate ourselves before thee with the most profound humility and holy awe. We feel our unworthiness to approach the Divine Majesty, but thou in mercy encouragest us to draw near, and through the gracious Mediator to come to thy throne of grace with the confidence of children to a father. There we are privileged to unbosom and unburthen our souls; there we may implore of thee mercy to pardon and grace to help us. On this day of heaviness to this household, we would recognise and bow before thee as the righteous Sovereign of the universe, as the uncontrolled Disposer of all events. Thou dost according to thy will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. Thou pullest down one, and thou raisest up another; thou woundest, and healest; thou killest, and makest alive. With thee are the issues of life and of death, none can stay thy hand, nor may any say to thee, What dost thou? While we acknowledge thy absolute right to do with us and to us as thou, Lord, seest fit, we know and are persuaded that thou reignest in righteousness, that thou dost all things wisely and well, and that however trying thy dispensations, and however inscrutable thy dealings may be, yet justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne, mercy and truth go before thy face.

Thou, O righteous Father, hast been pleased in thine adorable sovereignty to take away from us the desire of our eyes with a stroke, to rob us of one who was dear to our souls; yet, Lord, let us not refuse to be comforted, prevent us from murmuring and repining under thy chastening rod. Teach us to acquiesce in thy righteous dealings, help us in the sincerity of our hearts to say, The will of the Lord be done; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. This lesson, O Lord, we feel is very hard to learn. We cling to what is created, we cleave to the dust, we feel reluctant to part with the objects of our affection even at thy call. Do thou, gracious God, thyself teach us; teach us heartfelt submission, teach us holy resignation, teach us in patience to possess our souls. Lord, prevent us from fainting when we are rebuked of thee. But, O Lord, while we lament our present bereavement, let us never lose sight of the cause of all our woes. We would ever bear

in mind that it is sin that has robbed us of thy favour, robbed us of thine image, and robbed us of those friendships that sweeten the cup of life; and, therefore, when thou dost thus contend with us, and afflict us, we will justify thee in thy dealings, and clear thee when thou judgest and tryest us. And, O Lord, while we bewail sin's ravages, enable us to lament sin's guilt and defilement; soften these hard hearts of ours; give us, each one, to feel the plagues of his own heart; open up within us the sources of godly sorrow, that we may weep, and lament, and be in bitterness because of sin, of our own sins. Take away, we beseech thee, the guilt of sin through the blood of atonement, deliver from the love and the power of sin by the effectual working of thy Holy Spirit.

What cause have we, O Lord, to rejoice and be thankful, that while we mourn for sin, and mourn on account of personal distress and domestic bereavements, we are not left to mourn like those who have no hope, left to mourn in despair. This might have been our portion, and must, O holy Father, have been our portion, hadst thou dealt with us after our sins, or rewarded us according to our iniquities. We might have been justly allowed to eat the fruit of our doings without deliverance, without hope, to live in misery, and to die in misery. We might have been permitted to regard death as the extinction of our being, or the harbinger of woe unutterable; to look to the grave as man's eternal resting-place, or the threshold to the abode of misery. But blessed, for ever blessed be thy name, we are not left to die in our sins, to perish without a remedy. Thou hast looked upon us and pitied us. Thou hast sent the Son of thy love to seek and save that which was lost, to redeem our souls from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling; and by his precious blood, by his all-perfect righteousness, by his life and by his death, to bring salvation and consolation near to us, to restore our lost privileges, and our forfeited hopes. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift! What is man that thou takest knowledge of him! And we would adore and bless thee, O gracious God, for the revelation of mercy, the gospel of salvation, the words of eternal life.

O what precious promises, what soothing consolations, what glorious prospects, what ennobling hopes are ours through the mediation of thine own Son, as made known to us in the gospel of peace! Now we know that there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus; now we know that nothing,

neither earth, nor hell, neither life, nor death, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus; now we know that the sting of death is taken away, that the dominion of the grave is overthrown; now life and immortality are brought to light; now we are begotten to the lively hope of an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. O thou Spirit of all grace and consolation, thou divine Comforter, do thou in this day of tribulation, when our spirits are disquieted and cast down, draw near thyself to comfort us, bring the promises of thy word to bear on our circumstances, give us by faith to lay hold on them, to meditate, to feed upon them; give us to feel their soothing influence, their consoling power, their sustaining efficacy. We do find that man's help is vain in those dark and trying hours of life, do thou thyself uphold us; we do find that the consolations of the world reach not the wounded spirit with effect, do thou thyself refresh and comfort us with thine own consolations; Lord, withdraw us from the stream, carry us up to the fountain! When we are ready to faint in our minds, help us to consider him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself.

. We give thee thanks, O Lord, for that support thou wast graciously pleased to vouchsafe to the departed during his [*her*] season of affliction, for the patience that possessed his [*her*] soul when thy chastening hand was laid upon him [*her*], for the views that were opened up to him [*her*] of Christ and his salvation, for the firm hold he [*she*] was enabled to take of the covenant of peace, and for the calmness, and tranquillity, and good hope with which he [*she*] was enabled to commend his [*her*] spirit into the Redeemer's hands. And, Lord, we bless thee for the support and consolation that has been administered to surviving relatives under the blow of thy hand. Though lover and friend thou hast put far from us, and our acquaintance into darkness, yet thou hast enabled us, and thou art now enabling us to sing of mercy in the midst of judgment; to feel that the same hand that lays us low, does indeed hold us up; that while tribulation abounds, the consolations of God do much more abound; and bowing to the sovereignty of Jehovah, yet adoring the wisdom, the rectitude, the mercy, and the love of him that rules on high, thou art enabling us in faith to say, Though the Lord should slay me and mine, yet will I trust in him.

And now, Lord, continue to be gracious to us. Hold us up and support us when we leave

the house of mourning, and go forth to perform the last melancholy duty, and commit the mortal remains of our beloved friend to the cold mansion of the dead, the house appointed for all living. Even at the grave's mouth may we be cheered by the gracious declaration of the Redeemer: I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. Because I live ye shall live also. And, O Lord, though we do feel the pang of separation, do thou cheer us by the assured hope that that separation is not for ever; and though the grave has received and conceals from our view the ashes of one whom we loved so tenderly, yet let us be comforted by the thought that such as fall asleep in Jesus, die only to live, and live to die no more; that death's reign and the grave's triumph shall be of short endurance; that this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality, and that the ransomed of the Lord shall return to the Sion above, and shall be for ever with the Lord. And, Lord, help us to improve this trying dispensation of thy providence. O let us who remain remember that there is nothing but a step betwixt us and death; that we too shall soon be numbered with the dead, and that the voice thus addresses us this day, Be ye also ready. Help us then, O gracious God, to be living near to thee, to be living much in heaven. Raise our views and our affections above all the emptinesses of time, and enable us to live by faith in the unseen realities of eternity. O give us to feel that we are nothing but pilgrims and strangers in this world. May we be ever rising above it, and living above it, and may we be habitually looking forward to, and ripening for the rest that remaineth for the people of God. All our appointed time we would be waiting till our change come. And, O Lord, grant that when that solemn period shall arrive, we may have nothing to do but to commit our spirits into the hand of him who gave them, and to fall asleep in Jesus. And now, Lord, we give ourselves wholly up to thee, fit us for every duty, and prepare us for every trial, guide us by thy counsel while here, and afterwards receive us to glory. And to thee the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God, we would ascribe everlasting praise. Amen.

ON THE MORNING OF THE MARRIAGE
OF A FEMALE MEMBER OF THE
FAMILY.

Our Father in heaven, we would together approach thy throne of grace this morning gratefully to acknowledge the multitude of thy mercies, and to implore the continuance of thy loving-kindness. Blessed be thy great name, that in the riches of thy grace thou hast made the amplest provision for our immortal souls. As being guilty and defiled, they do indeed deserve to perish; but thou hast given thy beloved Son to be our Saviour, and hast addressed to us in thy word the overtures of reconciliation. In great condescension hast thou invited us to enter into the nearest and tenderest relation to thyself, and plied us with every consideration most fitted to win our confidence and love. O that thou wouldst effectually persuade us all to make an unreserved surrender of ourselves, and to join ourselves unto thee in a perpetual covenant not to be forgotten. Do thou betrothe us unto thee in righteousness, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies; and let us enjoy the safety, and blessedness, and honour of those to whom it is said, Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of hosts is his name.

We would unite, O God, in praising thee for the arrangements which thou hast made for the peace and good order of society, and for the innumerable mercies which thy providence is daily pouring down on the path of our pilgrimage. Do thou help us in all our ways to acknowledge thee, that our steps may be directed aright; and shed abroad thy love in our hearts, that all the events which befall us, and all the changes in our lot may work together for our good. On this day would we in a special manner implore thy blessing. Thou wast pleased to institute in paradise the conjugal relation; and the celebration of a marriage was graced by the presence, and honoured by the first miracle of our incarnate Lord. Now, therefore, that we have the prospect of having this ordinance observed amongst ourselves, we entreat that thou wouldst cause thy blessing to rest upon the head of her who is this day to be separated from her brethren, and enrich her with all precious things. Be very gracious to both the parties who are about to be united in wedlock. Let them be helpers of one another's joy, and live together as heirs of the grace of life. Grant that, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, they may be both righteous before the Lord, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord

blameless; and that they may so spend the time of their sojourning here below, as to be prepared for spending a blessed eternity together in that more perfect state of being, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are all as the angels of God.

Do thou fit us, Lord, for all the duties and trials to which we are respectively called. To the Saviour may we be united by a living faith. To him may we abide faithful even unto death. And so may we live at all times, that when the cry is made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him, we may be found with our lamps filled and trimmed, and may be honoured to go in ere the door is shut, and to sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

Heavenly Father, be our guide and guardian during the day. Take charge of all that concerns us. And O do thou grant that whatever changes come over us, we may enjoy thine unchanging friendship; and that to whatever separations we may be subjected, we may still be united in the bonds of the everlasting covenant. And all that we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

ON THE BIRTH OF A CHILD.

Let us have grace imparted to us, most holy and most merciful God, that on this occasion we may be enabled to encompass the footstool of thy throne with the sentiments which become thy faithful and grateful worshippers. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all our iniquities; who healeth all our diseases; who redeemeth our life from destruction; who crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercies. We lift up to thee, O God, our humble tribute of praise for all thy goodness manifested to us on this occasion. Our hearts give thanks to thee for the member thou hast added to our family, and for the life thou hast spared to us. In the midst of dangers which no knowledge of man could detect, and no power of man avert, thou hast watched over us, and brought us through the hour of trial in safety, and permitted us in the land of the living once more to offer up our gratitude to thee. Thou hast delivered our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. Blessed and holy Father, may the impressions which we now feel be permanent, and the thanksgiving we now render be evidenced in our conduct; that we may de-

vote our lives to the service of that God in whom we live, and move, and have our being. May the same kind providence which watched over this family still continue to bless us. And as thou hast heard our prayers, and brought us thus far in peace, hear us again when we implore that she whom thou hast thus mercifully dealt with may continue to experience much of thy favour, till in due time she is raised in strength, more resolutely determined than ever to live not to herself but to the God who redeems her. Take the child, with which thou hast been pleased to bless us, under thine especial care and favour. From this very hour sanctify him [*her*] to thyself. Amidst all the dangers of youth, amidst all the evils of this world, amidst all the snares and temptations which beset the human path, do thou guide and protect him [*her*], till having served thee on earth, the purposes of thy providence being accomplished, he [*she*] may be a member of the household of faith, and meet at last with the whole family of God in heaven. Thou knowest, O God, all that lies between the cradle and the grave; and therefore to thee would we dedicate our offspring, imploring thy favour, which is life; and thy loving-kindness, which is better than life. If thou shalt be pleased in thy wise yet dark providence to take him [*her*] away ere the years of maturity shall have been reached; if he [*she*] shall fall a victim to some of the diseases to which the young are exposed, O give us grace to part with those thou hast given in the spirit of Christian resignation. May we hold lightly by all the things of this earth, so that at thy command we may easily let them go, saying in faith, It is the Lord that gives, and the Lord that takes away, and blessed be his holy name. May we who are placed in the important situation of parents, hear thy voice at this hour saying, Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy reward. Grant us grace, O Father, to act as becometh us, so that having trained up our children in the path of Christ, at the great day of accounts we may be enabled to say, Lord, here are we and the children whom thou hast given me. Hear us graciously, thou hearer of prayer, and grant us an answer in peace, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FOR THE USE OF PARENTS
ABOUT TO DEDICATE A CHILD
TO GOD IN BAPTISM.

Help us, Almighty Father, to approach thee on this occasion with those feelings of mind with

which thy worshippers should be filled. To thee, O God, do we lift up our souls, imploring that thou wouldst graciously listen to our request, and for the sake of thy Son grant us an answer in peace.

Blessed be thy great name for the institution of the ordinance of the gospel, whereby thou art instructing the people in the things which concern eternity. We praise thee for the appointment of the sacraments, which thou hast constituted as seals to the covenant thou hast made with us through Jesus Christ. We praise thee for thy goodness in permitting us to engage in these ordinances and to enjoy these sacraments; and we implore that thou wouldst make them to us the power of God and the wisdom of God for the salvation of our souls.

In a very especial manner would we bless thee that thou art affording to us the privilege of the ordinance of baptism, therein to dedicate our offspring to thee. Help us, O Lord, to entertain those sentiments, and O form those resolutions and cherish those feelings which become Christian parents on an occasion so solemn and interesting. Give us proper and spiritual views of the nature of the ordinance, and through the symbols and signs employed, help us to discern the blood of Christ shed for the remission of sins, and the influences of the Holy Spirit, which alone can cleanse us from all our iniquities. And when we witness the water sprinkled, may we think of the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and seek with our whole heart and soul that inward purification which washing therein can alone give.

We are now about to dedicate our child to thee. It was from the Lord we received him [*her*], and in thus blessing us with offspring we would desire to hear thy voice as if speaking to us in this act of thy providence, and saying, Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy reward. Thou art the God of all. The souls of the parents and the souls of the children are thine; we therefore present our child to thee a living sacrifice, and we pray that it may be holy and acceptable. May he [*she*] be sanctified to thyself, and made one of thine own, even from this very hour. Deeply impressed with a sense of the solemn duty we are about to perform, and of the solemn engagements under which we are about to come, we would seek to be spiritually exercised while thus employed. And as thou hast encouraged us to bring our little children to thee, we would implore, O blessed Saviour, that thou wouldst take up this child in the arms of thy power and grace: put thy hands

upon him [*her*] and bless him [*her*]. May this child be one of the lambs of thy flock, whom thou wilt bear in thine arms, and carry in thy bosom, watching over his [*her*] welfare through time, protecting from trouble, guarding from temptation, guiding by thy grace and counsel in the ways of truth and holiness, till at last thou bringest him [*her*] to that place where thou leadest thy people unto fountains of living waters. Oh, let us now be in the Spirit; with humble yet grateful hearts may we engage in this solemn service; and may the prayer we now offer, and the prayer of the church to be offered for us and our offspring, rise up before thee as the incense of a sweet-smelling savour. And may our persons and our services be accepted, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FOR THE USE OF PARENTS AFTER
HAVING DEDICATED A CHILD
TO GOD IN BAPTISM.

In the goodness of thy providence, O Lord, we have been permitted to present our child to thee in the sacrament of baptism, and to receive for him [*her*], the sign of his [*her*] admission among the members of the visible church. The promise is to us and to our children, and therefore we entreat thee to make good thine ancient covenant, and be the God of believers and of their seed for ever. Oh, hear the prayers which the assembled church offered up on this solemn occasion; and deny not thy grace and blessing to us or our child. We have now solemnly pledged that we will bring him [*her*] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, doing all that in us lies to teach him [*her*] to remember his [*her*] Creator in the days of his [*her*] youth. But Oh! thou knowest how feeble and fleeting are the best of human resolutions; how soon the remembrance of vows and promises is forgotten, amidst the business or temptations of life: and therefore our prayer is, that thou wouldst deepen the impressions we presently feel, and strengthen the resolutions we presently form, and help us by thy grace to act in accordance with our solemn engagements. And while we thus endeavour to use the means, do thou, O God, grant thy enriching blessing; pour out thy Spirit upon our seed, and thy blessing upon our offspring, that they may spring up as willows by the water courses, and grow in grace and religious knowledge as they increase in stature and strength.

We would renew our supplications on behalf of the child we have now dedicated to thee in baptism. Known to thee, O God, are all things from the beginning to the end. While we are ignorant of the various events which may befall him [*her*], between this and the grave, we would desire, in faithful confidence, to commend him [*her*] to thee and the word of thy grace. Oh, permit not any evil to befall him [*her*] by the way. Amidst all the troubles incidental to youth, do thou be with him [*her*]; when he [*she*] walks through the waters, may they not overwhelm him [*her*], and through the fires may the flame not kindle against him [*her*]. Spare him [*her*]. Oh Lord, if it be thy holy will, till in the days of our old age our eyes be gladdened by seeing him [*her*] walking in the ways of thy commandments. When temptations assail, those temptations to which youth are so peculiarly exposed, be thou his [*her*] upholder, strengthening against every enemy, raising above every difficulty, and guiding amidst every snare, supporting under every trial, and causing all these to work for good; till having completed all the purposes of thy providence here he [*she*] may be taken home at last to the mansions of glory. Or, if thou hast determined that his [*her*] existence here is to be short and fleeting, and that he [*she*] should be called away in infancy or youth, Oh, may we in that trying hour remember the deep solemnities of this; and then, in the spirit of Christian resignation give him [*her*] up to thee, the God to whom we have this day devoted him [*her*]. Hear us, O God, in heaven, thy dwelling-place; and when thou hearest, graciously answer and forgive, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

ON PARTING WITH RELATIONS GOING
TO A FOREIGN COUNTRY.

Almighty Father, we give thee thanks and praise that we are permitted to kneel together once more around the family altar, to mingle our voices in praising thee, to listen to thy holy word, and to pour out our hearts before thee. Lord, we pray that we may carry all our griefs and all our joys to thee. In everything enable us by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make our requests known unto thee. Help us to look so directly to Jesus, to wash so thoroughly in his blood, to put on so fully the white raiment of his righteousness, that we shall have access with confidence by the faith of him. May there be no distance between us and thee,

no cloud between our soul and thy pardoning smile. May we feel that our sins, which are many, are forgiven us. May we feel thine eye resting upon us in love. Help us to spread out all our sorrows, all our anxieties, all our wants before thee in this time of need.

We praise thy holy name for all the mercies thou hast poured down upon us from the first day until now. Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with his benefits, even the God of our salvation. O that our souls might bless thee, and not forget any of thy benefits. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but thou hast never suffered us to want any good thing; thou hast given us daily bread; thou hast provided raiment; thou hast made our cup to run over; thou hast made the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. We thank thee for every domestic blessing we have enjoyed together; for every smile of thy providence upon our dwelling; for all the joys of home and of kindred, thy holy name we praise. How wonderfully thou hast dealt with us! How many families thou hast afflicted from morning to evening, stroke upon stroke, and wave upon wave; but thou hast been very pitiful toward us, as a father pitieth his children.

We thank thee for all the afflictions we have passed through together. It has been good for us that we were afflicted. Before we were afflicted we went astray, but now we have kept thy word. O that we were wise, and would observe these things, that we might understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. But most of all we bless thee, O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou hast blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; that thou hast chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before thee in love. Ah Lord! it would be a painful parting this day if we were to separate for eternity; but we do bless thee for as many of us as thou hast made one in Christ Jesus, and for the sweet assurance that we shall never be separated in the world to come.

We confess the sins we have committed together; we have been most unfaithful to thee and to one another. Ah Lord! we remember this day how little we have cared for one another's souls; how much of our time together we have misspent; how many precious opportunities we have neglected; how little we have warned, entreated, comforted, and exhorted one another; how little we have been like Andrew, who brought his own brother to Jesus; how little we

have lived together, as we shall wish we had done when we stand before the great white throne. It would be a righteous thing in thee to make this day of our parting a cloudy and dark day, a day of trouble, and rebuke, and desperate sorrow. But thou hast not dealt with us as we have sinned, neither rewarded us according to our iniquities. As the heaven is high above the earth, so great has been thy mercy toward us. As far as east is from the west, so far hast thou removed our transgressions from us.

Almighty Father, we now commit ourselves and one another into thine everlasting arms, for time and for eternity. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so be thou round about our souls from henceforth and for ever. In an especial manner we now commit to thee those dear ones who are now with us, but soon to be parted from us. Thou didst give them to us at the first; thou hast made them sweet and pleasant to us. We have gone together to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holy day. And now, in thine all-ruling providence, thou art calling us to separate, help us to say, The will of the Lord be done; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. Watch over them, O Lord, by night and by day. When they go from one nation to another, suffer no man to do them wrong; yea, reprove kings for their sakes. Suffer not their foot to be moved. Thou that keepest them will not slumber. Thou keepest Israel, thou dost neither slumber nor sleep. Be thou, O Lord, their keeper. Be thou their shade upon their right hand. Let not the sun smite them by day, nor the moon by night. O Lord, preserve them from all evil. Preserve their souls. Preserve their going out and coming in, from this time forth and even for evermore. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given to Christ, that they all may be one. We pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.

We pray for those that remain behind, that thou wouldest make up for all thou takest away. Art thou not more to us than ten sons? Thou only art the fountain of living waters. When thou takest away the streams, may we come the more to thee. However far separated, O our Father, grant that we may all be branches of the true vine, filled with the same spirit, bearing the same holy fruit. Far from one another, may we be equally near to thee. May we lean on

the same beloved coming up out of this wilderness; may we walk in the same narrow way that leadeth unto life; may we kneel together on the same footstool. Washed in the same precious blood, may we draw near to the same heavenly Father, and obtain the same blessings for ourselves and for one another. Enable us to fill up the short time that remains in the service of Jesus. Help us to confess Jesus before men, that he may confess us before thee, his Father, in heaven. Keep us from denying Christ before men, lest he deny us before thee, his Father, in heaven. And may we all be found at the right hand of Jesus, in that awful day when he shall separate the nations as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And may we hear him saying to all of us, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. If we are never to meet together on earth any more, grant, O our Father, that we may meet in that day to cast our crowns together at the feet of Jesus, and to sing, Worthy is the Lamb! And now, we commend one another to thee, and to the word of thy grace, which is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with our spirits. Amen.

FOR A FAMILY ABOUNDING IN WEALTH.

O Lord, thou art the giver of all good. From thee cometh down every good and perfect gift. It is thine to endow with wealth, or subject to poverty. And in all the allotments of thy providence thou dost what is right. It has pleased thee, in thy great mercy, to bestow upon us, thine undeserving and sinful creatures, a goodly portion of the blessings of this life. May they never be a snare to our souls, nor be suffered to estrange our hearts from thee. O Lord, enable us ever to remember that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. May we continually feel that poverty, with the divine favour, is better than riches where thy blessing is not. Help us to bear in mind how transitory is all earthly good. May we never count it our treasure. May we be independent of it, and ready to part with it at thy call, knowing that riches make to themselves wings and fly away. And while we possess them, enable us, O Lord, to consider through whom we have obtained them, even through the worthiness and intercession of our Lord Jesus

Christ. Enlighten us to see that all blessings, temporal as well as spiritual, are the purchase of his death, and secured by the covenant of grace. May we thus not only enjoy them, but may we enjoy Christ in them. May they continually serve as memorials of his love, and excitements to obedience. And while we own that we have received all we possess out of his pure and undeserved mercy, may we cheerfully contribute of our substance to such ends as are agreeable to his will. Cause us ever to be sensible that wealth is a talent for which we must render a strict account. Lord, forbid that it should harden our hearts, but may we so employ it as to cherish the habits of generosity and benevolence. May the mind that was in Christ be in us, and may we delight in doing good. As we have received freely, may we be enabled to give freely. We know that the Lord loveth a cheerful giver, and we pray that we may be such. Enable us to make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. And bless all those with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, whose temporal wants we seek to relieve. Sanctify their poverty, and sanctify our wealth. And grant that both they and we, when our earthly course is ended, may be admitted to the enjoyment of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. We ask all for Christ's sake. Amen.

IN A TIME OF POVERTY.

We will bless thee, O Lord, at all times. Thy praise shall be continually in our mouth. Our soul shall make her boast in thee; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. Truly thou art good to Israel, to such as are of a clean heart. Thou hast been our hope, O Lord God; thou hast been our trust from our youth up. We are as a wonder unto many, but thou art our strong refuge. How wonderful has been the way by which thou hast brought us! Thy way toward us has been in the sea, and thy path in the deep waters; and thy footsteps are not known, yet thou hast us led like a flock. Thou hast done all things well. How amazing has been thy love in visiting our souls, when so many have their good things in this life, and are stumbling over their riches into eternal misery. How shall we praise thee that though thou hast brought us low in the things of this world, thou hast made us rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. O Lord, we feel it would be no profit if we had

gained the whole world and lost our own soul. Teach us to praise thee, that in taking away from us earthly comforts, thou hast given us wine and milk without money and without price, even the sure mercies of David. We thank thee that we feel the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus sweeter than all the world. Thy smile is better to us than the smile of all the creatures. There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in our hearts, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.

We are less than the least of all thy mercies. We are not worthy that thou shouldest come under our roof. We know that thy judgments are right, and that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted us. We are like a beast before thee.

We were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us. Every particle of matter obeys thy holy will. Every created being, except ourselves and devils, serves thee alone. We only live contrary to thee. Every power of our body and mind is naturally at enmity to thee. We have no right to anything but wrath, condemnation, and curse. Lord, humble us under a sense of our vileness, and teach us to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ. May we be found in him, and in him obtain the children's bread and daily mercies according to our need.

Lord, we remember the grace of the Lord Jesus, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor; may this make us contented to be poor. We remember that he had not where to lay his head; may this make us thankful for our humble lodging. We remember that others ministered to him of their substance; may this take its sting from our poverty. Make us feel it enough for the disciple to be as his master, and enough for the servant to be as his lord.

We pray for near access to thee in this time of need. When thou takest away our broken cisterns, may we come near to the fountain. When thou showest us the emptiness of the creatures, lead us to the fullness of the Creator. When we have little of the bread of this life, may we have much of the bread of God which came down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. May we feel so accepted in the beloved, so completely thine, that we shall have no anxiety for to-morrow. Thou art able to supply our need. Thou art able to strengthen us to bear our want. Thou that didst not spare thine only-begotten Son, wilt thou not with him also freely give us all things? Help us to be-

hold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet thou, our heavenly Father, feedest them. Make us feel that in Christ Jesus we are much better than they. Help us to consider the lilies of the field, which toil not, neither do they spin; and yet, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. O thou who clothest the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, make us feel that thou wilt much rather clothe us though we are of little faith. O our heavenly Father, who lovest us better than we love ourselves, thou knowest that we have need of all these things. Make us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and let all these things be added unto us. Keep us without carefulness. Make us cast all our care upon thee, for thou carest for us.

O Lord Jesus, we remember in the days of thy flesh that thou hadst compassion on the multitudes because they had nothing to eat, and thou wouldest not send them away fasting lest they should faint by the way. Thou didst take the seven loaves and give thanks, and brakest them, and gavest to the disciples, and they to the multitude, and all did eat, and all were filled. Lord Jesus, thou art the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Have compassion upon us. Give us this day our daily bread. O Lord, thou didst say by the mouth of thy servant David, that the young lions may lack and suffer hunger, but that they that seek thee shall not want any good thing. Do as thou hast said. Let this promise be yea and amen to us in Christ Jesus. Supply all our need according to thy riches in glory. We look to thee. May we be lightened, and our faces be not ashamed. For thine own honour we plead with thee to fulfil thy word. Will not the world reproach thy great name if thou help us not? Our tears have been our meat day and night, while they say to us continually, Where is thy God? O our Rock, why hast thou forgotten us? Why do we go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in our bones our enemies reproach us, while they say daily unto us, Where is thy God? O let not our soul be cast down, let it not be disquieted in us; make us hope in thee, for we shall yet praise thee, who art the health of our countenance and our God.

O Lord, do not let us despise thy chastening, neither be weary of thy correction. Help us to inquire into the cause of thy controversy with us. Make us new creatures in Christ Jesus. May we no more be haughty. May we learn

of Christ, who is meek and lowly in heart. May the Holy Spirit fill every chamber of our heart. Cast out every idol. If we be poor, make us Christ's poor. May Jesus be known in our dwellings for a refuge. May we not be like Martha, careful and troubled about many things. May we be like Mary, who chose the good part that could not be taken away from her. The law of thy mouth is better to us than thousands of gold and silver. Keep us near to thee all the day. Satisfy us with thy love at all times. Make us glory in nothing but in the cross of Christ. By it may the world be crucified unto us, and we unto the world. Be thou our Shepherd, and we shall not want. Make us to lie down in green pastures, and lead us beside the still waters. Restore our soul, and cause us to walk in the paths of righteousness, for the sake of thy name. Yea, though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, make us fear no evil, for thou art with us. Thy rod and thy staff, let them comfort us. Prepare a table before us in the presence of our enemies. Anoint our head with oil. Make our cup to run over. Make goodness and mercy to follow us all the days of our life. And may we dwell in thy house for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR A FAMILY SUFFERING FROM THE
LOSS OF WORLDLY SUBSTANCE.

The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord. Once we were rich, but now are we poor; and we look to thee, O Lord, in whose hand are all our ways. Teach us submission to thy will. Help us to say with all our heart, Thy will be done. May we be willing to bear the ills of poverty, if thy will be so; and may it be given us to say, I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. May we not only bear thy will, O Lord, but may we have grace to profit by it. May we be enabled to say, under the loss of worldly substance, When we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. May we feel that this is not our rest. May we be careful to have our treasure laid up in heaven. And may we be taught to estimate more highly those durable riches that cannot be taken from us. At the same time, Lord, enable us to trust in thee for such things as are necessary for us. Our heavenly Father knoweth what things we have

need of. Thou hast said, Bread shall be given, and water shall be sure. Help us to believe the promise, and wait for its accomplishment. May we be contented with what thou art pleased to bestow. Thou hast assured us that all things are ours. Enable us to exercise faith in the promises of the covenant. May we remember the promise, According to your faith so be it unto you. But, O Lord, deliver us from presumption and self-deception. Enable us to examine ourselves whether we be indeed in the faith, whether we are truly united to Christ, and possess a covenant-right to receive out of his fullness. And may we never forget that thou hast united the diligent use of the means with the enjoyment of the end. Enable us to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. May a blessing be upon our basket and our store. We would remember him who fed the thousands with the few loaves and fishes. May he feed us. Enable us to lead a life of faith upon his providence and grace. May we be willing to be dependent upon thee. May we be satisfied to have reason to say, Give us this day our daily bread. And whatever we receive may we have grace to look upon as thy gift for Christ's sake, and be enabled to use it in thy service, and to thy glory. However it may please thee to deal with us, may it ever be our principle and rule to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, knowing all other things shall be added unto us. All we ask is for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THANKSGIVING FOR AN ABUNDANT
HARVEST

Lord God Almighty, we desire to draw near to thee with that humility which becomes us as creatures, and with that contrition and self-abasement which becomes us as fallen and guilty creatures. We feel and lament our backwardness to come to a throne of grace. Help, we beseech thee, our infirmities; pour out upon us a spirit of grace and supplications; draw us, and we shall run after thee.

We adore thee as our Creator and Preserver; our constant Benefactor and our Friend. Often, too often, have we been unmindful of thee; and yet, at no time hast thou been forgetful of us. Thy forbearance is indeed wonderful! By hardness and impenitency of heart; by neglect of duty; by sins committed against knowledge, and with an high hand, we have been offending

against thee from day to day: and yet all this while thou hast been sparing us alive, and upholding us with thine arm, and waiting to be gracious. Yea, thou hast not only borne with us, and been in no haste to remove us out of our place as cumberers of the ground; but thou hast given us all things richly to enjoy; thou hast led us and fed us all our days; and thy mercies have been new to us at every moment. Never hast thou left thyself without witness, in that thou hast given us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. Year by year thou visitest the earth and waterest it; thou makest it soft with showers, and blestest the springing thereof. Surely as the heavens are high above the earth, so are thy thoughts and thy ways better than ours.

Thou, Lord, keepest covenant and promise, and thy faithfulness hath again been manifested anew. The pastures have been clothed with flocks; the valleys also have been covered over with corn; and the little hills have rejoiced on every side. And now, thou hast crowned the year with thy goodness, and hast poured us out a blessing so abundant, that there hath not been room enough to receive it. Bless the Lord, then, O our souls; and all that is within us, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits; who crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth our mouth with good things; and who prepareth of his goodness for the poor.

Amid all thy giving, O God, deny us not the blessings of thy salvation. Thine ancient people did eat manna, even angels' food, in the wilderness, and are dead; and all thy temporal bounties notwithstanding, a day, we know, will come when we also will sicken and die; when our breath will depart, and the fashion of our countenance will be changed; and when we shall go the way whence we shall not return. But we rejoice to be told of that bread which cometh down from heaven, of which, if any man eat, he shall live for ever. Lord, evermore give us this bread, even a saving interest in him which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. And whilst we reiterate this our request unto thee for the best of all blessings, even eternal redemption through the merits and atonement of thine own Son, we would draw encouragement alike from thy providence and from thy word. Thou hast no pleasure at all in the death of him that dieth; thy mercy endureth for ever; and thou art far more willing

to grant, than we are in sincerity to seek, the benefits of thy Son's mediation. And in the blessed influences of the summer's sun and the summer's dew; in the clouds that drop down fatness upon the pastures of the wilderness; in the rich and laden harvest which, year by year, is seen to move over all the land; and which tells of a beneficence that is never weary, and of a love which is as the love of a parent; in all this we behold the tokens of a good-will, which nothing but perverse carelessness on our part can prevent from showering down upon us all that is necessary to make us wise, and happy, and good for evermore; in all this we perceive the marks of the same bounty, in the exercise of which thou givest grace and glory, and withholdest no good thing from them that love thee. And from these, then, the intimations of thy word, and the ways of thy providence, we would draw encouragement whilst we reiterate our earnest prayer for the blessings of thy salvation. O grant us then the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered; give us of the quickening, and enlightening, and purifying influences of thy Holy Spirit; so shall thy temporal mercies be blessed to us; so shall we receive them with thankful hearts; and so shall the lives which are supported by thy bounty be devoted to thy service. Hear us, O God, in these our petitions; and accept of us also in our thanksgivings, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

IN REFERENCE TO A SCANTY HARVEST.

Most gracious and ever-blessed Lord God, we desire at this time to draw near unto the footstool of thy throne. We would render unto thee that worship which is thy due; and by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, we would make known unto thee our requests. May we remember that angel and archangel stand in thy presence with shaded visage; and that it cometh us to worship reverently towards thy holy place.

Thou, even thou, art God; there is none else; there is no God besides thee. Thou sittest upon the throne of the universe, and doest according to thy pleasure in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of this world; none can stay thy hand from working, or say unto thee, What doest thou? Thou formest the light, and createst darkness: thou makest peace, and createst evil: thou the Lord doest all these things.

We would acknowledge and adore thee, at his time, as the bounteous Giver of all good. There is not a comfort we enjoy, not a supply which we receive, not a hope that gilds our path and sustains our heart, but comes from thy gracious hand. The plenteousness brought by the appointed months of harvest is thy yearly gift, and it is because thine hand is opened liberally that the wants of all creatures are supplied. And when, as now, the blessing is less abundant, it still becomes us to bow the head and adore; to say, Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive the evil also?

O God, we believe that thou dost not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men; we believe that amid much apparent confusion thou doest all things wisely and well; we believe that thy chastenings are, all of them, administered in a spirit of parental kindness and love. And we confess that such discipline is not uncalled for. Often have we received thy providential bounties, and rendered thee no thanks; often have we drunk at the stream of thy benefits, without so much as looking up to thee the fountain whence they do all proceed. And such, unhappily, is our tendency away from thee, that wert thou sending us abundance by a law equally fixed with that under which the seasons follow one another with undeviating regularity, it is to be feared that our gratitude would be less than ever, and that thy hand would be less than ever recognised and adored in the supplies which are daily sent us. Not only, therefore, would we adore thy sovereignty; not only would we acknowledge thine unquestionable right to do what thou wilt with thine own; but we would bless thee also for all that discipline by which thou art seeking to impress us with a sense of our entire dependence upon thee, of our helplessness without thee, and of the miserable condition of all those who live and die in a state of alienation from thee.

O give effect, by the demonstration of thy Spirit, to that lesson which, in the course of thy providence, thou art seeking to impress upon our minds and hearts; and grant unto us and unto all the families of this land, that we may be humbled before thee; that we may understand that it is upon the account of our sins that thou art contending with us; and that in all time coming we may constantly set thee before our face, and be habitually thankful for thy mercies, and be found walking in the way of thy commandments. Above all, grant unto us that we may not be involved in the guilt

and condemnation of those who are insensible to thy goodness in giving us a Redeemer; who think that they are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; but, as befits those who in themselves are undone, and yet have been told of thine unparalleled goodness in providing an all-sufficient Saviour, even thy well-beloved Son, let the language of our hearts be, Thanks unto God for his unspeakable gift.

We feel, O God, the force and conclusiveness of the inspired argument: He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things; and we are encouraged to pray, Give us this day our daily bread. Also, in a time of scarcity and privation, be thou the friend of the poor. When thy people were faint through hunger in the wilderness, thou didst send them manna; when thy servant, the prophet, fled from the face of a wicked prince, and dwelt by the brook Cherith, thou didst send him supplies by the ministry of the birds of the air; and when the people of Samaria were pressed by grievous famine, thou didst make over to them the abundance of the Syrian camp; and we rejoice to believe that thine ear hath not become heavy, so that thou canst not hear, nor hath thine arm been shortened so that it cannot still save. Put it then, we beseech thee, into the hearts of those who are rich and increased with goods, to devise liberal things towards the poor; and, in regard to these last, do thou impart unto the little that they have the blessing of the widow of Sarepta, that the handful of meal waste not, and that the cruise of oil do not fail.

These, our petitions, O God, are before thee; incline thine ear and hear; for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do: for all that we ask is in the name, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, thy Son and our Saviour. Amen.

FAMILY PRAYER FOR THE LAST DAY OF THE YEAR.

Oh Lord! the ancient of days, whose goings forth have been from of old, even from everlasting, in the beginning hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a gar-

ment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed, but thou art the same and thy years shall have no end. What are we, the children of a day, whose life on earth is as a shadow that declineth; whose emblem is the flower of the field; in the morning, it flourisheth and groweth up, but the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more; what are we, that we should approach thine august presence, or lift our suit to the ear of the Eternal? Thou inhabitest eternity; it befits that creatures should approach thee with awe whose breath is in their nostrils.

Oh thou who art the first and the last! on the expiry of another year we prostrate ourselves as a family at thy footstool. Our days are verily as an hand-breadth, season after season passes, and we scarcely note its march. Day succeeds day, night succeeds night, but neither day nor night can assert one trace of stability. The visions of life flit before us like so many dreams of the night; when the morning breaks the illusions have gone, and the hours have gone with them. Oh do thou break in upon our souls with that rousing consciousness of the vanity of time, which shall ensure our hearts for eternity. Do thou teach us, do thou effectively teach us, so to number our days, as to apply our hearts unto wisdom! May the effect of all our lessons of life's insufficiency be to engage our aspirations to God!—to God, the antidote to the vanities of time—to God, the sum of blessedness—to God, the centre of a creature's hopes and felicity—to God, the fountain head of mercies whether for time or for eternity—to God, the only adequate portion for an immortal nature—to God, the covenant God, whose memorial is pity and love to all them that seek him.

Oh Lord! on a review of the past season, we adore that kindness and care which in thy merciful providence have encompassed our path. Thy goodness has been like the morning sun; it has smiled upon us with returning day. Thy faithfulness has been like the gathering twilight, it has encircled us around with the canopy of thy guardian vigilance. If we appeal to the day as our witness, it testifies, God is kind. If we appeal to the night as our witness, it testifies God is kind. If we make our private experience the judge, the testimony is, God is kind. If we make our family experience the judge, the testimony is, God is kind. If we look to the sum of our past life, the moral is, God is kind. If we look to the accumulation of blessings, which crown our present experience, the record, the signal record is, God is kind.

And, heavenly Father, if we have to acknowledge thy temporal benefits, how much more those which are spiritual in their character! Oh! we would not forget that a past season has been rich to us in the means of grace. We would fervently thank thee that during the bygone year a Saviour has been proclaimed to us: that sabbaths have come round to us, rich with the inscription of grace, mercy, and peace; that thy word, thy blessed word, has opened its page to us, replete with hope to the guilty, and fragrant with consolation to the wretched; that the good news of salvation have saluted our ear, inviting us to the ascription, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men. Oh grant, we entreat thee, that our multiplied privileges and opportunities may be fraught with some corresponding improvement. Allow us not to shake off the conviction, that to whom much is given of them shall much be required. Let not an expiring year take its final flight a solemn witness against us of inconsistencies or derelictions, of misimproved opportunities or neglected seasons of grace, of ordinances outraged or gracious appeals frustrated, of convictions stifled or religious advantages defied! Oh grant, that even the eleventh hour of a season's circuit may realize some more favourable experience. May this last day of the year not pass away without such precious participation of gracious influences as shall make it also the crowning day of the season. May thine own blessed Spirit pour out his rich effusions like the latter rain, reinforcing the final promise of the year. May gracious fruits yet be reaped from all the gracious means we have enjoyed, and may a departing season yet carry in its bosom treasures that shall enrich the garner of eternity.

Heavenly Father, we would make confession before thee of all during the expiring year wherein we have offended or done amiss. Sins of omission have prevailed against us; sins of commission, we fear, have prevailed against us. And if we can condescend on many such delinquencies, how much more can thine all-seeing eye detect our many iniquities.

Oh do thou enter not in judgment, but in mercy, into a scrutiny of our character. Do thou lay bare the obliquities of our hearts, that we may learn to hate them ourselves. Do thou search us and try us, and see what is the wicked way that is in us, and lead us in the way everlasting. Do thou grant us in thy mercy to see ourselves in that light in which thine eye views us, and to see salvation in that light in which its own native glories enshrine it.

Oh God! we pray that when the closing day of life shall arrive; we may be found prepared for it. Oh may Christ at that solemn season be our preparation and our hope. May we be encircled with the embrace of his grace and his faithfulness. May our pillow be the bosom of his promises, and when we resign ourselves to the inexorable summons of death, may our rapturous anthem be the inspiring testimony of a Saviour: I am the resurrection and the life.

Heavenly Father, anew we consign us to thy keeping; never leave us, and never forsake us, but let thy goodness and thy mercy follow us, seeing all we ask is for Christ's sake. Amen.

FOR THE FIRST DAY OF THE YEAR.

O Lord, who art the great first cause, thy power gave birth to creation, and thy word ordained the first march of time. On the dawn of a new season we would prostrate ourselves at thy footstool to bespeak the safeguards of thine everlasting arm, and to commend to the riches of thy beneficence the short and uncertain compass of our appointed time upon earth. O may the contemplation of the vanity of the things of life, written on the ceaseless lapse of the seasons, dictate to our minds the attainment of a better and more enduring portion. May God's transcendent excellencies, thine own infinite fullness of good, so pre-eminently contrasting with the shadowy and fallacious character of created joys, determine our aspirations to Jehovah himself as our heritage. Abandoning all unsubstantial and visionary forms of happiness, may we seek it in the supreme centre of good himself; in the joys and consolations of his grace; in the light and love of his countenance; in the unfailing enjoyment of his bliss, in whose presence is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.

O God, do thou teach us on the recurrence of a season so solemn to us, to dedicate our early vows to thyself. To thy matchless providence we owe it that we are encompassed around with thy benefits. Thou hast caused thy sun this day to shine upon us; thou hast spread the table for our returning wants; thou hast imparted whatever of comfort enters into our domestic lot. O teach our souls to bless thee for thy goodness, and all that is within us to magnify thy name. May our hearts, as the altar on which we would spread our family thank-offering, be taught to shed forth their

grateful incense, thine own Spirit supplying the celestial fire which shall kindle the sacrifice. And, Lord, we would hail these immediate benefits as the earnest of thy goodness to us during the season. We implore a continuance of the good gifts of thy providence. May each succeeding day bring us the sunshine of thy beneficence. May thy hand supply our returning wants; give us each day our daily bread. May thy foresight avert impending calamities; deliver us from evil. May thine eye tend our faltering steps; thou who hast led our fathers through their weary pilgrimage, be the guide of their succeeding race. May thy paternal care recruit the current of our domestic joys; do thou who settest men in families, order our family allotments in love. May thy merciful providence encompass us during the day; let not the sun smite us by day. May thy guardian faithfulness overspread us during the night; let not the moon smite us by night. And O, with all thy benefits, bestow upon us the thrice-precious gift of hearts inspired to thy praise. Let thy beneficent providence constantly stir up within us daily and fervent gratitude. Let our home be thus the little sanctuary whence incense and a pure offering shall ascend to thee; ascend to thee on each returning day with the constancy of the morning sacrifice; ascend to thee on each returning night with the acceptance of the evening sacrifice; ascend to thee in every instance as the oblation of pure hearts fervently; and ascend to thee purer and purer till the measured blessings of time give place to the ampler joys of eternity.

O Lord, it may be thy pleasure that, during the course of the year on which we have entered, affliction shall becloud our path. We pray, if consistent with thy will, that it may be otherwise. In the spirit of the prayer of our Lord, we would plead that, if it be possible, such a cup may pass from us. Let us, if it please thee, be taught rather by the gentler methods which thou employest with thy children; let us be swayed by the sweet suasions of the gospel, and by the benign and gracious admonitions of thine own blessed Spirit. But, if thou hast otherwise determined; if the cup may not pass away from us except we drink it, prepare us to say, Thy will be done. Give us grace to exercise patience in proportion to our adversities; to kiss the rod, even while we feel its smart; to bless the scourge, even while we feel the stripe; to glorify thee, even while we endure the fires. And O do thou bestow upon us consolations commensurate with every dark and trying hour. May thine own

blessed comforts revive our souls. May thine own sweet mercies pour themselves like some softening balm over every aching sore. May thy paternal endearments flow in upon us a more than antidote to every distressful visitation. May the unspeakable soothing of thy blessed Spirit breathe in upon our hearts, giving them even more gladness than when our wine and our corn increased. And may the fruit, O may the fruit of all be to bring us nearer to God. As we are divorced from creature comforts, may we live closer to the Creator. As the ties of earth are broken, may the ties of heaven be strengthened. As affliction strips us of temporal joys, may we be supplied out of Jehovah's fullness. As vanity overspreads the visions of life, may our retreat more eagerly be to that bosom of divine light and love in which an immortal spirit shall find unalloyed bliss through eternity.

O Lord, we cannot look out on the prospects of a now revolving year, without preferring our most earnest prayer that thou wouldest grant us to make a more adequate improvement of our religious advantages than in times past we have done. We have to confess, with sorrow and shame, that too nearly, in many instances, have we verified the reproach of the parable, Lo, yet this one year more have I sought fruit on this fig-tree, and have found none. O do thou, nevertheless, forbear to execute judgment upon us. Say not in thine indignation, Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? Continue to us rather, in thy great mercy continue to us, the ordinances and opportunities of the gospel. But O, above all, grant that we may more adequately profit by them; may learn more of the grace and excellency of Christ; know more of the heighth, and depth, and length, and breadth of his love; acquire a more thorough conformity to his will; be more imbued with his Spirit; be more entirely moulded to his likeness; wear more of the graces and virtues which adorn his calling. May the close of the year, if we are spared to reach it, witness us in advance of the Christian growth which marked its commencement; witness us more assimilated to the Saviour, and more ripe for the felicities of heaven.

O merciful Father, we consign us unreservedly to thy keeping. Thou hast been our help in times past. Be our portion evermore. And now, let our prayer come before thee with acceptance; let thine ear be attentive to our cry. And do thou to us, and do thou for us, above what we can ask or think, for Christ's sake. Amen.

FAMILY PRAYER FOR A BIRTHDAY.

Oh Lord! the Creator of the ends of the earth, the former of our bodies and the Father of our spirits, we approach thy footstool to bless thy name and to lift up our supplications to heaven, thy dwelling-place. Thou hast made us and not we ourselves; we are thy people and the sheep of thy pasture. Thy fostering providence sustained us amid the helplessness of infancy; thy tender guardianship watched our ripening years; thy hand has showered around us the blessings which from day to day have sweetened the path of life, and thy matchless goodness has so crowned the portion of our temporal bliss, that we may fitly adopt the language, Our cup has been made to run over. We would fervently lift the testimony at thy footstool, What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits? Thy loving kindness has been new to us every morning, and thy faithfulness repeated to us every night.

But above all thy other works are the mercies of redemption. When we had forfeited every original hope, thou didst beget us to a new hope. We thank thee, that when we were in our low and lost estate, thine own eye beheld us with a look of pity, and thine own arm grasped us with the embrace of salvation. We bless thee, we unfeignedly bless thee, that the same hour which recorded a Saviour's birth, recorded also the day-spring of our own hopes; that the same anthem which proclaimed, To you is born a Saviour, proclaimed also, Peace on earth, good-will toward men. Oh may the rise of the Sun of righteousness be associated in our experience with the rise of the day-star in our own hearts; may the nativity of the Saviour be reflected in the new birth of a soul begotten to his image. May Christ be formed in our hearts, the hope of glory, and enshrined in our sentiments, and sympathies, and affections; may the holy One of God's anointing be also the beloved One of our souls.

Heavenly Father, on an occasion interesting to us, for it is the day when one of our circle was born into the world, we would approach thee with our special tribute of praise. We bless thee in respect of the individual whose nativity this day commemorates, for all the goodness and mercy of which thy Providence has been the vehicle. We thank thee in respect of us unitedly, for the loving-kindnesses which, as a family, we have received from stage to stage of our history. Our birth has thus been only the first-fruits of a goodness and mercy which has tended us from day to day and from night to night; a goodness which hath extended itself to

every period and every province of life; a goodness which multiplying itself as our days advanced, has shed blessing on our domestic sphere, gladdened the bosom of our home, mitigated our sorrows, enhanced our joys, chastened our trials, brightened our hopes, ministered to our wants, refined our pleasures, spread a charm over the past, and gilded with promise every vision of the future. Oh let us feel constrained to set up our Ebenezer, our memorial, our most grateful memorial, Hitherto the Lord hath helped us.

Heavenly Father, when recounting thy goodness in giving us being, we would not forget that there is a second birth, to which, if we are strangers, it had been better for us not to have received being at all. We would recognise our Saviour's language, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Oh may thine own divine Spirit, who can alone re-fashion a soul in thine image, beget us to that spiritual renovation which shall usher us to newness of life. May his quickening power implant all those divine graces and instincts, and principles and tastes, which mark the nativity of a child of God. May Christ be formed in our souls. May faith in him, as the principle of a new life, quicken all the activities of the inner man. May the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts. May the simplicity of little children in Christ characterise our uniform conduct. With the instincts of little children, may we desire the sincere milk of the word. With the filial confidence of children may we cry, Abba, Father. With the dutifulness of children, may we grow up to him in all things, who is our Head, even Christ. May we evince ourselves the children of the light and of the day, the children of him who is light and in whom is no darkness at all. May the title, Sons of God, be verified both in our tastes and experience.—In our *tastes*,—may we be followers of God as dear children. May our souls follow hard after him. May our aspirations lift themselves to that sublime tribute of filial devotedness, As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so pant our souls after thee, O God.—May our *experience*, again, be that of thy children. Vouchsafe to regard us with a parent's love. May thy Spirit bear witness in unison with our spirits of thy fatherly complacency. May the consolations of God, like a parent's caress of tenderness, gladden our souls. May the delights, the sweet mercies of God, gladden our hearts. May ours be the record on earth, One is our Father, even God. May ours be the patrimony in heaven, to join the general assembly and church of the first born, of which God is the Father and Christ the elder Brother.

Oh God! prolong to us as a family thy kindness and thy care. We have enjoyed them since we had our being, continue them to us till the hour of death; and may eternity be to all of us the ripe birth-day of a still higher, and holier, and happier existence.—Hear us in heaven, thy dwelling-place, and when thou hearest, forgive, and accept, and do, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TO BE USED BY A SAILOR'S FAMILY
IN REFERENCE TO HIS ABSENCE.

Eternal God, we bow in reverence before thy throne, and bless thee that we are privileged to have access unto thee; we give thanks unto thy name, O righteous Father, that thou hast not banished us eternally from thy blissful presence, as our rebellion deserved, but hast kindly invited us sinners to approach thee again; welcoming us back to thee through Jesus the one Mediator. Everlasting praise be to God, unceasing thanksgiving to Jehovah, for his love to a guilty world, and for the redemption of his elect people by Christ. Grant, O blessed Lord, that the sound of the gospel salvation which hath reached this earth, may also reach our hearts; and give us a personal and saving interest in the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. O give us, with all earnestness and without delay, to receive Christ, and with him all the fullness of his purchased and covenant blessings. May each one of us now bending before thee in prayer, and may all connected with us, wherever they be, have the comfortable and well-grounded assurance that we are reconciled to God through Christ the Son of his love. May we know and feel, in our happy experience, that our sins are pardoned, that we are accepted in the Beloved, that we have cast in our lot and portion with God's people, and that we are now all on our journey to Emmanuel's land. O may thy Spirit enlighten, strengthen, guide us; may we each one, day by day, be planting our footsteps more firmly on the Rock of ages; may we be taking refuge in Christ, the only ark of safety, and then, though the waves of trial dash against us, we shall not be moved. Give us, O blessed God, the faith that unites to Jesus, that overcometh this evil world; give us the love that marks out thine own children. Give us the firm and assured hope of eternal joy through him that loved us; keep us in mind, O Lord, that we are pilgrims and strangers here, and that our home, our rest, is above. Thou dost separate us at times from those who

are very dear to us; but O may none of us be separated from Jesus at any period of our earthly sojourn. Holy Father, keep from sin those of our number that are absent in the midst of the dangers of the ocean; we cry unto thee to preserve him [*them*] that is dear to us, that we may see him [*them*] again in peace and safety; when the storm rages, and he [*they*] is [*are*] in fear, do thou calm his [*their*] troubled mind; and speak peace and say, Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid. Thou art the God of providence, the elements obey thy command, and when the proud waves uplift themselves, thou canst still them again; we commit unto thy care and keeping those whom we love, and who may be now tossed upon the raging billows. Let thy mighty power defend him [*them*]. Be thou, the eternal God, their refuge, and underneath and around them let thine everlasting arms be. Bring them, O Lord, to their appointed haven, and let his [*their*] soul rejoice in thee. They see thy wonders in the deep, O let not them be careless and indifferent to thy voice and to thy warnings; may they remember whence deliverance cometh; not by their own might, or wisdom, or power, but from thee, the God of Jacob; and Oh! may they be ready and willing to ascribe unto thee all the glory and the praise. We give thee, O Lord, our most cordial and hearty thanksgiving for thy mercies to us and to all connected with us. Oh give us to live closely to thee, and to testify our gratitude by obedience to thy commands; and we would not forget all those that are on the sea. Preserve, amid the perils of the deep, the father, that his children may rejoice together; the husband, that he may comfort and cherish her that is dear to him; the son, that he may be the support and the stay of his parents. Be also with the stranger, and undertake thou for him.

O Lord, hear us in behalf of all men; especially would we pray for thine own people, and for those of them that are under any trial. Hasten the time when Christ shall reign spiritually with a sceptre of peace over a ransomed and regenerated world. Purify thy church; and now Lord, what wait we for? our hope is in thee. Hear, answer, and accept of us, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

FOR A FISHERMAN'S FAMILY.

O Lord our God, thou art very great. Thou art the only Creator and sovereign Ruler of all

things. At first thou didst command the waters under the heavens to be gathered together into one place, that the dry land might appear. And still art thou mightier than the noise of many waters; yea, than the great waves of the sea, so that thou canst say to it, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed. Yet thou art as gracious, as thou art great: and worthy, therefore, to be the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea. Thou hast manifested thy compassion, especially, in providing for us an ark of safety. We had exposed ourselves to the storm of thy wrath; and had it not been for thy mercy our souls should have been utterly wrecked, and even swallowed up in the abyss of hell. But thou hast sent thine own Son from heaven to rescue us from ruin. And we pray thee that, as he is both able and willing to save us, thou wouldst enable each of us to cast ourselves upon him, and to cleave to him as our only and our all-sufficient Saviour. O may we be in him, as Noah was in the ark, that we may be preserved from the dangers that surround us, and may live as the monuments of thy distinguishing mercy, and may be prepared for the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

We thank thee, Lord, for all the provision thou hast made for us here below. Thou hast created whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas: and over the fishes of the sea hast thou given man dominion that he may use them for his support. Be thou, then, the guardian of all who, in the exercise of their lawful calling, cast angle or spread nets in the sea. May their lives be preserved, and their labours prospered; and may they ever gratefully trace their safety and success to thee. Bestow thy special blessing on the members of this family. May our industry be crowned with success, and our wages be spent in thy fear. Do thou also graciously grant deliverance when any of us are exposed to danger; and sanctify to us any losses and bereavements we may sustain. And O may he who chose for his apostles the fishermen of Galilee, be our friend and Saviour. May he dispose us to follow him as his disciples, and to devote ourselves to his service.

We pray for all that go down to the sea in ships, and do business on the great waters, and see thy works and wonders in the deep. Give them safe and prosperous voyages. And when by thy command the stormy wind is raised, and the boisterous waves are lifted up, so that the mariners are at their wits' end, do thou hear

them as they cry to thee, and deliver them out of their distresses, making the storm a calm, and bringing them to their desired haven. And O that those who are delivered would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Be peculiarly gracious to any connected with ourselves who may be on the face of the deep. Let us have comfortable tidings of them from time to time. And let them, in due season, be restored to their homes and their friends.

We plead with thee in behalf of all our brethren. Let the net of the gospel be more widely spread, and let it inclose great multitudes. Make our own minister a successful fisher of men. May we individually be brought to the Saviour; and having enjoyed his presence and protection during all the troubled voyage of life, be brought at length in safety to the promised land, through his merits and mediation. Amen.

DURING THE VISITATION OF A PESTILENTIAL EPIDEMIC.

O Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. To whom can we go but unto thee, thou hast the words of eternal life? Give us nearer access to thee than ever we enjoyed before. From the end of the earth, will we cry unto thee. When our heart is overwhelmed, lead us to the rock that is higher than we. We have ran with the footmen, and they have wearied us, but now thou art calling us to contend with horses. In the land of peace, wherein we trusted, we have been wearied, but now thou bringest us to the swellings of Jordan. Oh grant, that we may trust in thee, and feel thee a present help in trouble.

O Lord, being afflicted, we pray; we set our faces to seek thee in this day of trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy. We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly; and have rebelled even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To thee our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against thee. O Lord, thou hast watched upon the evil and brought it upon us.

Humble each of us now kneeling before thee, under a sense of our own guilt and deformity in thy sight. In our own heart do thou reveal

to us the cause of thy judgments. Alas, we confess, that in every one of us there is as much sin as may justly be the cause of this great evil that has come upon us. How long we lived without thee in the world, serving diverse lusts and pleasures; living in malice and envy, hated and hating one another. Our sins, as we are in ourselves, appear like an infinite deluge, or mountains over our heads. As a fountain casteth out her waters, so our heart casteth out its wickedness. Everything in which our heart is concerned is polluted. If thou wert to deal with us according to our sin, thou wouldst send the breath of the pestilence into our dwellings, and sweep us away with the besom of destruction. Our flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and we are afraid of thy judgments. Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return ye children of men. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as asleep; they are like the grass which groweth up; in the morning it flourisheth and groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withered. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. Why hast thou spared us hitherto, O Lord? We are no better than others. Lord, teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. We pray that this time of darkness may lead us to cleave closer to the Lord Jesus Christ. O thou that art the hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, like rivers of waters in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, hide us deeper in thyself. Cause us to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning, for in thee do we trust. Deliver us, O Lord, from our enemies; we flee to thee to hide us. O grant, in this time of calamity, when so many are taken suddenly to their great account, that we may be found in Christ. May the Lord be all our righteousness. May Jesus be our present and eternal all.

May we be willing to be hell-deserving in ourselves, and heaven-deserving in Christ alone. Love us freely; be like the dew upon our souls. May we be kept in perfect peace, our minds being stayed on thee, because we trust in thee. Make us feel that the same hand that wields the pestilence was nailed to the accursed tree for us. Cover us with thy feathers, and under thy wings make us trust. Make thy truth our shield and buckler; do not let us be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness,

nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. When a thousand fall at our side, and ten-thousand at our right hand, may it not come nigh us. Be thou our refuge, then there shall no evil befall us, neither shall any plague come near our dwelling.

We pray that we may improve by this solemn visitation. May afflicting time be quickening time. Lord, increase our faith; Lord, teach us to pray. Lord, what change wouldest thou have wrought in us? Cleanse us from secret faults, keep us back from presumptuous sins. Wean us from this world; may our conversation be in heaven. Make us willing to be sick and willing to be well; willing to live and willing to die; willing to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

Most merciful Father, we pray for thine own children who are sick, that thou wilt be their physician; make all their bed to them in their sickness. Give them peace and joy in believing; give them an anchor within the veil. Make them more than conquerors through him that loved them. O God, who hast no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they should turn and live, spare unconverted souls who are now trembling on the brink of eternity, Lord, turn their hard hearts, turn their dying eyes to Jesus lifted up to save sinners. Give them to look as the dying thief looked to Jesus, and to cry, Lord, remember me. Have compassion on the bereaved; may they spread their sorrows before Jesus.

And now turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease. Wilt thou be angry with us for ever; wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee? Give a double portion of thy spirit to thy ministers at this solemn time, that they may be instant in season and out of season. Quicken thy people in prayer and supplication, and let this time of calamity be a time of blessing from on high. May many souls be saved, and may glory dwell in our land. Make us more compassionate to the sick and afflicted; make us more laudably alive to the interests of Zion; make us more humble, more holy, more watchful; make us take heed, watch, and pray, seeing we know not when the time is, lest the master coming suddenly should find us sleeping.

O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake, O our God. And may glory undivided everlasting be to thee, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

GRACES BEFORE MEAT.

I.

O Lord, thou spreadest a table for us from day to day. The earth is full of thy riches, and of these thou art constantly bestowing abundance upon us. Grant, O most gracious Father, a covenant-blessing with this renewed manifestation of thy bounty and faithfulness, and pardon our every sin, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

II.

O Lord, thou feedest and thou clothest us, and all that we have is thine. Of thine own blessings hast thou now set before us. Grant thy fatherly blessing with them, that we may enjoy them free from the curse which sin has entailed on all our earthly enjoyments. May they be to us the gifts of covenant-grace, and tokens of thy love. Pardon, and accept us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

III.

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of heaven and earth, thou art ever mindful of our wants. Thy faithfulness never fails, thy bounty is ever with us. Gracious Lord, vouchsafe us thy forgiveness and blessing with these the gifts of thy providence. Let these mercies come to us with Christ present in them all. May we feel them doubly sweet because gifted to us for his sake. Blot out our offences, and quicken us for thy service, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

IV.

In thee, O Lord, we live, and move, and have our being. Keep us mindful of our dependence upon thee, and our obligations to thee. Do thou graciously forgive our sins, and sanctify us by thy Spirit. Grant us also, now, a Father's blessing with the bounty of thy providence, for Christ's sake. Amen.

V.

Most gracious God, we are entirely dependent on thee for all things pertaining to life and godliness. Feed us with food convenient for us. Do thou also feed our souls with the bread of life; and strengthen us that we may do thy holy will, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

VI.

O God, we are utterly unworthy of the least of all thy mercies; and yet thou art continually doing us good. As thou spreadest a table for us, let us receive thy blessing with our daily bread. Do thou likewise dispose us to labour for the bread that endureth unto everlasting life; and while we hunger and thirst after righteousness, may our souls be filled thereby, for the sake of our blessed Saviour. Amen.

GRACES AFTER MEAT.

I.

Most gracious Father, accept of our united thanksgiving for the mercies thou hast now conferred upon us. May we ever feel the constraining influence of thy love; and walk in love, obeying thy commandments in all things. Let us not want for the bread of life. Fill the cravings of our soul with the provisions of thy grace, and pardon and accept of us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

II.

We praise thee, O God, for thy constant love. Thou art ever renewing thy mercies towards us, and constantly renewing and enhancing our obligations to love and serve thee. Help us, gracious God, to discharge these obligations, and stir us up to glorify thee in our lives as well as our lips. Forgive all our sins, and accept of us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

III.

Praised be thy name, O God, for the token of thy abiding love which we have now enjoyed. Surely thou art ever merciful. O make us good stewards of thy manifold grace. Let not thy bounteous fullness steal away our hearts from thee. Bind us by thy living grace to thyself, and fill us with the Spirit of Christ, and the glory shall be thine for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

IV.

Thou loadest us daily with thy benefits, O God of our salvation. Let our souls live and praise thee. Make us, indeed, as the children

of so many mercies, devoted to thy fear; and let us find acceptance in thy sight, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

V.

Accept, O Lord, our grateful acknowledgments for the mercies we have now received. Teach us thy statutes; and enable us, as we live by thy bounty, to live to thy praise. Sanctify us for thy service, and accept us in the Beloved. Amen.

VI.

We bless thee, heavenly Father, for what we have now received of thy bounty, and pray thee to enable us to use it in thy service. Give us grace to remember that man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of thy mouth; and by that word do thou nourish us up unto life eternal, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

SHORT PRAYERS TO BE USED BEFORE COMMENCING FAMILY WORSHIP.

I.

O God, do thou bless us with special favour in the situation in which we are now placed, as thus surrounding the domestic altar; and do thou send help to us out of thy holy sanctuary. May thy grace be found, in our happy experience, to be sufficient for us. May thy strength be perfected in our weakness, and thus we shall read with profit to our immortal souls a portion of the sacred oracles, and thus we shall address ourselves to thee with acceptance at the throne of grace. O Lord, do us all the good we need, according to thine abundant mercy, in the Son of thy love, and all we ask is for his sake. Amen.

II.

Most merciful God, as we well know that the preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue are from thee, we would earnestly entreat that in thy kindness and love thou wouldest impart all the preparation we require to enable us to worship thee at this time in a becoming manner. May we realize the majesty of thy presence, so that we may appear with the greatest reverence before thee, and may we be

deeply impressed with a sense of our own unworthiness, that we may appear in the exercise of the utmost humility and contrition of spirit. Help us withal to come before thee in holy confidence, that we may with the freedom of children drawing near to a kind father, willingly confess our many transgressions, and supplicate thy pardoning mercy. O Lord, deal with us very bountifully, in accepting of our persons and services, and our praises shall be of thee, through Jesus Christ, our all-prevailing Advocate. Amen.

III.

Heavenly Father, we desire to give thee thanks for the freedom of access we at all times enjoy into thy holy presence, whether in public or in private: and in drawing near at this time may we find that in very deed thy presence is with us. Lord make it known unto us that thou art nigh by causing us to sing thy praises with melody in our hearts. Enable us to sing with the spirit and with the understanding also. Guide us likewise in the reading of a portion of thy most blessed revelation. May the sound of it not only reach our ears, but may it touch our hearts, and may we be filled with all joy and peace in believing. We also entreat thee, O Lord, to direct us in lifting up our voice to thee in prayer. Do thou thyself fill our mouths with arguments wherewith we may order our cause before thee. O God, answer these our desires, and our approach at this time will be as the offering of the morning and evening sacrifice. Hear us in Christ. Amen.

IV.

O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. We gladly recognise it as our duty to worship thee in the family, and now that we are together in a family capacity, that we may unite in thy service, be thou in the midst of us to bless us and to do us good. Bestow on us the spirit of true devotion, that we may worship thee who art a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. Visit us with the joys of thy salvation. Uphold us by thy Holy Spirit, and so we shall rejoice in calling on thy most holy name, and in learning what thy will is in that part of the sacred records which we are about to consult. O shine on thine own word, and shine in our hearts by the enlightening influences of thy Spirit, that we may gladly take thy word as a light to our feet and a lamp to our path. Direct us in singing

thy praises; and bow thy heavens when we bow our knee before thee in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

V.

O Lord, we desire not only to regard it as an important duty, but also to esteem it as an unspeakable privilege that we are permitted to assemble in this manner, that we may engage in praising thy holy name, and in supplicating thy favour at the throne of grace. Thou requirest of us that in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving we should let our requests be made known unto thee. Prepare us for doing so in this approach, and do thou return to our prayers an answer in peace. Do thou also give testimony to the word of thy grace in our experience, by causing those instructions in it to which our attention may be directed at this time, to reach our hearts. Thus teach us thy will and our duty, and may we be accepted through the Saviour, on whose atoning sacrifice we altogether depend in looking for a blessing on our services. Amen.

VI.

O God, may all worldly and distracting thoughts be shut out from our minds whilst we are occupied in the solemn services on which we are entering. O forbid that we should seem to show much love with our mouth, whilst it is recorded in judgment against us that our heart is going after its covetousness. O Lord, may it be far from us to offer unto thee strange fire, and to mock thee with sacrifices that are vain. Wherefore do thou mercifully undertake in our behalf to bring us into thy holy presence with clean hands and a pure heart. Spiritualize our sentiments and feelings, that we may find acceptance in thy sight, and experience the comfort of holding sweet fellowship with thee, and with thy Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Ghost. Deal thus bountifully with us, O Lord, according to thy riches in grace through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

 PRAYERS SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN.

MORNING.

O God, thou art very great, but thou art also very kind. May I fear thee because of thy

greatness, and may I love thee because of thy kindness. I have often sinned against thee, and I deserve to die and go to hell. But thou hast preserved me in life throughout another night, and thou art still giving me many comforts. Thou art even offering to pardon me and make me happy for ever. O may I believe what thou hast told me about Jesus Christ, who took little children in his arms and blessed them, and died upon the cross for sinners such as I am. May I love Jesus, and do what he has commanded me. May I avoid falsehood, and quarrelling, and all other sins. May I remember that thou always seest me, and that it is very wrong and dangerous to disobey so great and holy a king and so kind and affectionate a Father. Bless my parents and all my relations. May they serve and enjoy thee. Bless the whole world. Keep me this day by thy power and mercy, and answer these my prayers for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

EVENING.

Great God, whom the holy angels worship, and who art far more glorious than they, look down in mercy on a little child, and hear his [*her*] prayers and praises. Thou hast been very kind in sparing me so long, and in giving me so many comforts. And O how kind hast thou been to me and others in sending Jesus Christ that sinners might be saved! For his sake pardon my sins, and enable me to obey thee, and take me at last to heaven. O may I become wiser and better the longer I live. Be very kind to my parents and to my other relations and friends. May they be children of God and disciples of Jesus Christ. Have pity on children who have lost their father or mother, and be thou thyself a kind parent to them. Care sick persons, and send food to the poor. And O may sinners re-

member that they have souls as well as bodies, and be prepared not only to live, but also to die. Keep me in safety throughout this night, and bring me, if that be thy holy will, to the light of another day. O God, have mercy on me, forgive my sins, and hear these my prayers, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

CHILD'S MORNING PRAYER.

O Lord thou art my God, and I praise thee that thou dost let a child like me kneel at thy throne. Look on me in Christ, and for his sake love me, and blot all my sins out of thy book. I thank thee that I have seen the light of this day. I thank thee for the rest of the past night. Lord, keep me through this day. May thine arm lead me, and guard me from all harm. May I walk and act as a child of Christ; may I hate all sin, and love all that is good, and live, as thy word bids me, to thy praise. Let my friends be thy friends, and be thine in this world, and thine in the world to come. Make us all pure in the blood of the Lamb of God that was slain, and good by thy grace, for Christ's sake. Amen

CHILD'S EVENING PRAYER.

This night, O Lord, I lift up my voice to thank thee for all the love thou hast this day shown me. Thou hast kept me from harm, and hast given me all that I stood in need of. Make me to love thee more and more, and to serve thee with all my heart. May my sins be pardoned, and my soul saved for the sake of Christ. Watch over me and all whom I love this night, and while we sleep be our shade on our right hand, and spare us to meet on a new day, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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